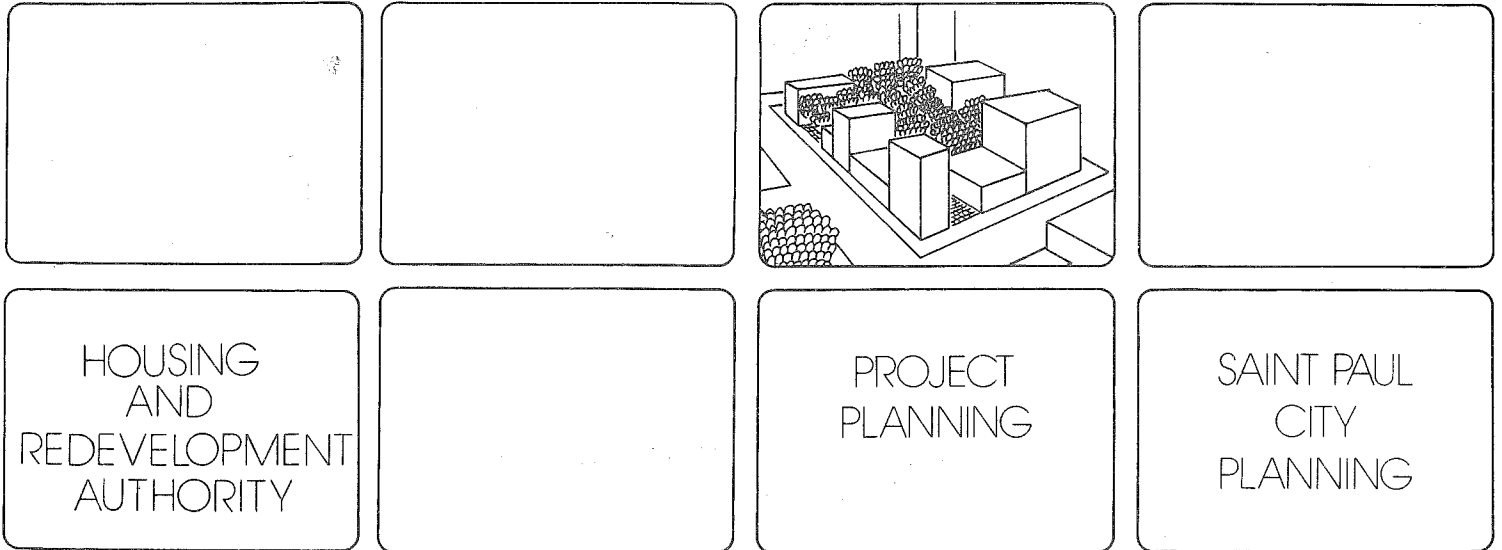


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THE PROCESS FOR GENERAL DISTRICT PLANNING IN SAINT PAUL



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IN

ST. PAUL

A STAFF WORKING PAPER

Prepared jointly by:

St. Paul City Planning *Commission*.

St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority

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SUMMARY

1. General District Plans are neighborhood-level plans which deal with the physical, social, and economic problems of the district and proposed solutions. They are prepared with extensive involvement by district residents and businesses. The citizens of the district should consider the General District Plan "their" plan in the sense of working on the plan, knowing its contents, and being willing to pursue its implementation.
2. The main purposes of General District Planning are:
 - To work with neighborhoods in developing commonly-accepted plans which promote the best interests of the neighborhood;
 - To provide two-way communication channels so that the districts have input into citywide plans and so that citywide plans can be translated into effective actions which are acceptable to affected neighborhoods;
 - To establish a planning and implementation approach which encourages neighborhoods to explore and make use of all available implementation resources.
3. District Planning should use the citizen participation district boundaries established by the City Council in their public hearing on July 22, 1975, and should be carried out under the auspices of representative community organizations unless district councils are established, at which time the district councils should become the responsible district organizations.
4. The representative community organizations are required to appoint a General District Planning Committee for their district which would coordinate three subcommittees specializing in physical, social, and economic problems and proposals.
5. The districts have two major areas of responsibility: the organizational and communications work within the district which ensures the legitimacy of the plan; and the definition of problems which leads into the development of goals, objectives, proposals, and implementation steps.
6. The basic responsibilities of the planning staff assigned by City Planning and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority are to provide technical planning assistance, to aid the districts in carrying out the planning process, and to be advocates of planning.
7. General District Plans should be approved by the representative community organizations or district councils after public meetings in the districts, and should then be officially adopted, modified, or rejected as segments of the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and the City Council. General District Plans should also provide the basis for official Redevelopment Plans where such are required.

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8. The plans for each district should address whatever problems are most critical in that district. A common format for General District Plans is recommended so that the Planning Commission, City Council, and city departments and agencies can refer easily to parts of any district's plan.
9. A series of general steps for the planning process is set forth and then broken down into a detailed itemization of tasks and the parties responsible for carrying out the tasks.
10. Work done by the districts and planners should serve both the long-range objective of developing General District Plans and the short-range objective of deciding action proposals for CD Year II. It is recommended that the districts begin the planning process but concentrate until mid-October on only four or five major problems which will lead to CD proposals, and subsequently expand their scope to the full range of district problems which should be covered in the district plan.

PREFACE AND CREDITS

This staff working paper develops a concept for participatory planning at the district level and recommends a detailed process for carrying out the planning concept. Ideally, the district planning process itself would have had extensive citizen input. But due to the urgent need to begin district planning during CD Year I, public input has been limited to a review by a number of community organizers. To overcome the lack of broad-based input, this paper will be left in "draft" status during the year and will be subject to revision and refinement based on citizen and staff experience and comment.

The process recommended in this paper draws on neighborhood planning experience here in St. Paul and in other cities. Essentially, the process lays out an organizational structure for district planning and a sequence of steps for sound planning analysis. The recommended organizational structure will have to be flexible to accommodate different situations in the various districts. The analytic planning sequence should be regarded as less flexible, although the task list may be adjusted. This paper attempts to lay out a process which can be used by any district; it does not intend to pre-determine what the specific contents of a district plan should be.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Community Development Act of 1974 gives the City of Saint Paul both the opportunity and the responsibility to establish a new system of planning for subareas of the city. The citizen participation process during the first half of 1975 has produced a delineation of boundaries which subarea planning, along with several other governmental activities, can tie into. The difficulties in evaluating proposals for Community Development Year I pointed up the critical need for subarea plans and the citizen participation process has demonstrated that neighborhoods want planning assistance.

City Planning and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority have jointly developed the process outlined in this paper. Subarea plans will be called "General District Plans" and will correspond to the seventeen districts established for citizen participation. General District Plans will be prepared jointly by General District Planning Committees and the appropriate planning staff. Each General District Planning committee will work under the general guidance of the appropriate community organization.

Although the proposal for General District Planning has been triggered in Saint Paul by the Community Development Block Grant program, the uses of the General District Plans go far beyond the allocation of Community Development funds. Several cities around the country had undertaken district planning programs before 1974. General District Plans can be used, for example, to guide decisions about the City budget, the Capital Improvement Program, private development, and special purpose grants. The process for General District Planning will provide a two-way communication channel which will facilitate sound planning at both the citywide and neighborhood levels.

A number of benefits for neighborhoods result from the General District Planning process. First, the work on the plan becomes a catalyst for organizing districts and demonstrating that people really are concerned about the future of their neighborhoods. Second, the process helps districts to organize their ideas and make realistic proposals which recognize the limits of the City's resources. Third, the process brings the City's professional staff together with the districts' planning committees to formulate plans and implementation proposals. Thus, the General District Plan becomes the basis for continuing implementation efforts by the residents of the districts as well as the City.

There are also benefits for city government. First, the planning committees in the districts provide a forum for early compromise in situations where neighborhood plans and citywide plans conflict. Second, the city government is made aware in a systematic way of perceived problems and opportunities in the districts. Third, the General District Planning process puts to constructive use the energy of residents who want to work for the improvement of their own neighborhoods.

The General District Planning process assumes that the best plans for a district originate within the district. This assumption is made even though in many specific cases a district must accommodate itself to actions of citywide significance. The planning process reinforces the partner relationship between city government and community organizations.

II. PURPOSES OF GENERAL DISTRICT PLANNING

The major purposes of General District Planning are as follows:

1. To have well-informed neighborhoods realistically pursuing their best interests, thereby improving the quality of life in the city and increasing confidence in the future of the city's neighborhoods.
2. To ensure that citizen involvement can be channeled into a process which is constructive and into the development of planning products with lasting usefulness.
3. To set forth district positions on future development which are recognized by the district, city policy bodies and city departments and agencies.
4. To help to promote an effective working relationship between neighborhoods and the City, based on early two-way communication.
5. To provide communication channels for the integration of planning activities, so that districts have input into citywide plans and so that citywide plans can be translated into effective actions which are acceptable to affected neighborhoods.
6. To develop a planning approach which encourages neighborhoods systematically to explore implementation possibilities, whether through public funding sources, private market sources, foundations, or voluntary self-help.
7. To enable private developers to make proposals which they can be confident will win neighborhood support.

General District Planning ties together the several levels of planning. Planning will be taking place on five levels:

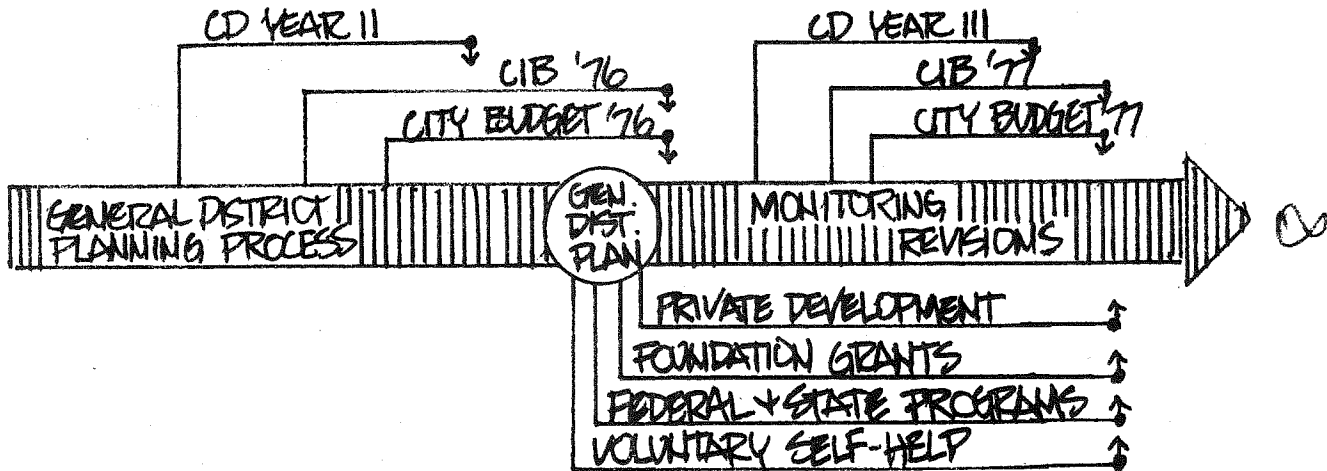
1. Metropolitan area - Metropolitan Council
2. Citywide - City Planning
3. District - City Planning and HRA
4. Project - HRA, Port Authority, Department of Community Services, etc.
5. Implementation - Design sections and programming divisions of operating departments and agencies.

Moving down the list, each level is more refined. Unless there are strong linkages both upward and downward, general policies are hard to implement and implementation activities suffer from a lack of coherent purpose.

General District Planning also ties together project planning and implementation activities over time and coordinates the work of various implementation programs.

The diagram below shows this concept of planning as a continuing function and the preparation of funding applications as planning off-shoots which end on the application date. Each off-shoot should make use of the most current planning products, but the planning work itself should not detour onto an application off-shoot or end on an application deadline.

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES FOR GENERAL DISTRICT PLANS



III. DESCRIPTION OF GENERAL DISTRICT PLANNING

The General District Planning process is a series of steps leading to the adoption of a General District Plan. The technical work on a plan takes approximately six months. If the public participation and reviews within the district are reasonably timely, a General District Plan can be produced in one year. Intermediate documents produced at early steps may be used by a district to support its proposals for action programs before the year-long schedule is completed. And after the General District Plan has been completed, it should be reviewed and updated periodically--perhaps every five years--since planning is ultimately a continuing process which addresses new problems and new opportunities as they arise.

A General District Plan is worth the effort only if the citizens of the district know the content of their plan and are willing to work toward its implementation. The district planning approach is decentralized and requires a great deal of involvement from the residents of the districts. Responsibility for preparing General District Plans rests jointly with the representative community organizations and the professional planners assigned to the respective districts.

District Organization for General District Planning

The representative community organizations may appoint ten to fifteen residents or businessmen of the neighborhood to the General District Planning Committee (GDPC). Members of a community organization's board may serve on the GDPC. The GDPC should be representative of all areas and all interest groups in the district.

It is suggested that the GDPC set up three subcommittees to deal with physical planning, social planning and economic planning. The subcommittee chairpersons would be selected from the GDPC but the subcommittee would not be limited in size, and its members would be neighborhood volunteers.

The subcommittee structure and their related areas of interest are:

1. Physical Subcommittee

- a. Land Use
- b. Housing
- c. Transportation
- d. Public Utilities
- e. Environment
- f. Urban Design

2. Social Subcommittee

- a. Health
- b. Education
- c. Recreation
- d. Public Safety
- e. Other Cultural, Religious and Social Services

3. Economic Development Subcommittee

- a. Commerce
- b. Industry
- c. Employment
- d. Income and Welfare

Communication Within the District

Since the ultimate usefulness of a General District Plan depends on the district's support for it, the process has to be open and the community has to be informed. All district planning meetings are open to the public. Any resident or businessman in the district who communicates with the assigned district planner or signs a meeting attendance sheet is placed on a mailing list to receive district planning information.

After each major step in the planning process, information should be distributed to district residents concerning progress on the plan and upcoming steps. Community organization newsletters, neighborhood newspapers, flyers, mailings, and phone calls can all be used to help to keep the district public informed.

Role of the Planners

Planners assigned to do General District Planning advise the General District Planning Committee and its subcommittees. The basic role of the planners is to provide technical planning assistance and to aid the district in carrying out the planning process. The most important functions of the district planners are:

1. To discuss the General District Planning process with the planning committee.
2. To provide and analyze data.

3. To advise the GDPC on the validity and implications of planning proposals.
4. To help write drafts and reports.
5. To discuss citywide goals and policies which may affect the district, and to explain considerations relevant to the district's planning effort.
6. To communicate with functional specialists on the City Planning staff to keep the district informed of progress on citywide plans with regard to land use, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, human services, community facilities, urban design, etc.
7. To communicate with city departments and agencies in order to find out about plans and programs which will affect the district and to obtain information about the feasibility of program alternatives under consideration by the district.
8. To communicate to City Planning functional specialists and to city departments and agencies the concerns of district residents and special problems found in the district which should be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of citywide plans and programs.
9. To assist the district in making presentations of the General District Plan during the stages of adoption.
10. To advocate the planning function in the district.

The listed functions of the planners should not be construed as their functions exclusively. Committee members and district representatives should be encouraged to participate in any of the listed functions, and especially in communicating between the district and city departments and agencies.

The planners assigned to work with districts on General District Plans will not perform the role of community organizer. Despite some overlap in roles, the primary duty of community organizers is to organize and the primary duty of planners is to plan. Community organizers are well aware that many neighborhood problems are long-range and complicated but in most instances they can give long-range, multi-issue planning only secondary attention due to the pressure of their day-to-day schedules. General District Planners do address long-range (or mid-range), multi-issue problems in a way which provides a framework for the district to act effectively on its short-range, single-issue problems. The roles of community organizers and General District Planners should complement each other.

The planners are employed by the HRA or City Planning, but in practice they have a dual accountability to their assigned district as well as to their employer. In order to be effective, the planners should retain a professional objectivity--interpreting district concerns, problems, and plans fairly to citywide policymakers and city departments and agencies, and interpreting citywide policies, plans and programs fairly to the district. The planners should present professional ideas

to the district and give a fair professional evaluation of ideas generated by district residents. They should encourage the planning committees to be imaginative and idealistic, but at the same time to develop purposes which can be implemented.

Role of the District

A number of references are made in this paper to responsibilities of a district which undertakes a General District Plan. This section itemizes the most important responsibilities of the districts:

1. To establish a legitimate General District Planning Committee and subcommittees.
2. To identify district problems and establish needs.
3. To develop goals and objectives which address the problems and needs of the district.
4. To develop proposals and implementation steps which are consistent with the district goals and objectives.
5. To make a commitment to promote the adoption of the plan and to pursue the implementation of the plan after adoption.
6. To provide for necessary communication within the district.
7. To make arrangements for all committee and subcommittee meetings, including meeting places and meeting notifications.
8. To hold meetings in the district to get public feedback on the plan as it is being drafted, especially on the problems and goals sections.

The districts should have the help of the planners in carrying out items 2, 3, 4 and 8.

Adoption Procedures

In order to achieve broad support within the district, the General District Planning Committee should keep residents, businessmen, church and institution leaders informed as the plan is developed. The main opportunities for input by the district public come when a preliminary problem and goal statement and a preliminary plan are prepared for public discussion. The preliminary documents are prepared by the assigned planner and the General District Planning Committee. They make use of all formal statements written by the Committee and subcommittees as resources. The preliminary documents should be distributed as widely within the district as is feasible.

The General District Planning Committee holds one or more public meetings in the district to explain the preliminary plan and hear discussion of it. Divergent

opinions will probably come out of the public discussions. They should be taken into account by the General District Planning Committee and the planner when proceeding with the next step, which is refining the plan.

The refining and redrafting puts the plan into final draft form. The Committee approves the refined version as the General District Plan and submits it to the representative community organization for adoption.

The General District Planning Committee and/or the community organization presents the plan to the Planning Commission, which should hold a public hearing. Any substantial minority opinions of residents as well as a City Planning staff recommendation should be heard. The Planning Commission should officially accept the General District Plan as a segment of the Comprehensive Plan, officially modify it, or officially reject it. The Planning Commission should then transmit the plan to the City Council where, again, it should be officially accepted, modified or rejected. Should either body determine a modification or rejection may be necessary, additional meetings will be held with the GDPC. These meetings will provide a two-way exchange of information and reasoning which should attempt to resolve the difference before modifications or rejections officially occur. The intent of General District Planning is that the district plans should become clear, recognized policy. The plans should not be written only to be left with indefinite status.

Minnesota law requires that a "Redevelopment Plan" be drawn for an area before many of the types of activities funded by Community Development Block Grants can be undertaken in the area by the HRA. Where a Redevelopment Plan is required, the CD Year I planning process will be followed to produce the necessary documents for submission to and adoption by the HRA Board, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. In subsequent years, the General District Plan should provide the basis for the Redevelopment Plan and action proposals.

IV. NATURE AND CONTENT OF GENERAL DISTRICT PLANS

The problems of the seventeen districts vary widely. It is important that the plan for any district address whatever problems are most critical in that district. One district may choose to emphasize subject areas which another district chooses to deal with cursorily. For example, a district where many buildings are deteriorated and vacant will want to study land use carefully because redevelopment activities may allow for improvements in the land use pattern. On the other hand, a district which is fully developed with sound buildings might simply accept the existing land use pattern as the basic land use plan and give more attention to upgrading a neighborhood commercial street or improving human services.

All district plans should have a clear statement identifying district problems, a clear statement of goals, and clear itemization of implementation steps.

If each of the districts were to devise its own unique format for its General District Plan, the results would be very confusing to citywide policy makers and implementing bodies. A district's plan will be more effective if it follows a common format so that the Planning Commission, City Council, and City departments and agencies can refer easily to parts of any district's plan. Therefore, the format which follows is strongly recommended for fully completed General District Plans.

RECOMMENDED FORMAT FOR GENERAL DISTRICT PLANS

Summary of Recommendations Table of Contents

I. Introduction

- A. Purpose of the district in doing a General District Plan
- B. Context of the plan
 - 1. Brief history of the district
 - 2. Relationship of the district to the city and metropolitan area

II. The District Today

- A. Community organization
- B. Community assets
- C. Existing conditions

III. Problem Analysis and District Goals

- A. Problem statements and satisfaction levels
- B. Goals and measurable objectives

IV. Plan Proposals

- A. General discussion
- B. Physical development
- C. Social development
- D. Economic development

V. Implementation

- A. General discussion
- B. Implementation steps for physical development
- C. Implementation steps for social development
- D. Implementation steps for economic development

Appendices:

- A. Organizational structure used by the district to prepare the plan
- B. Subcommittee reports
- C. Special planning studies, including any necessary documentation for physical redevelopment proposals

V. STEPS IN THE GENERAL DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS

The purposes of General District Planning are accomplished by following a logical planning process. The steps in the process are valid for all neighborhoods in the city although neighborhoods with more planning experience will probably move through some of the steps faster than neighborhoods with less experience.

STEP 1

Organize

Work with neighborhood organizations to establish a planning committee to represent residents of the district.

STEP 2

Collect Data

Research, collect, and analyze information on the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the district.

STEP 3

Identify Problems

Determine the critical problems of the district in terms of satisfaction levels, that is, the incremental changes which would turn the problems around and in time would correct them.

STEP 4

Formulate Goals

Planning committee determines district goals and translates them into objectives.

STEP 5

Preliminary Plan

Planners and planning committee propose a plan that includes district goals and possible solutions to problems.

STEP 6

Refine Plan

Planners, planning committee, and residents make final revisions on plan and approve end product as the General District Plan.

STEP 7

Implementation

Final plan is presented to the appropriate bodies for adoption. Elements of the plan begin to be executed through various implementation actions.

STEP 8

Continuing Planning Planning Committee monitors progress and evaluates it according to the standards set in Steps 3 and 4. When changes in the plan are warranted and approved by the district, the plan is updated and revised.

VI. PLANNING TASKS AND PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM

This section elaborates on the steps in the General District Planning process. The chart on the following pages describes how the steps are actually to be carried out. Although some new tasks may be added in specific districts and some tasks listed separately may be combined, the listed sequence of tasks should be followed as closely as possible in order to maintain a clear understanding of responsibilities and to avoid long digressions.