



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

25 West Fourth Street, Ste. 1400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Telephone: 651-266-6700
Facsimile: 651-266-6549

TO: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee
FROM: Jamie Radel (Senior Planner) and Alena DeGrado (Planning Intern)
DATE: June 22, 2018
SUBJECT: Initiate a 40-Acre Zoning Study for Stryker Avenue

BACKGROUND

The Stryker Avenue corridor between Congress Street and Annapolis Street is a small, mixed-use district in Saint Paul's West Side neighborhood. Stryker Avenue is one of three mixed-use corridors on the blufftop. The corridor currently contains a limited number of non-residential uses, including auto service shops, a laundromat, a bar, a seasonal ice-cream shop, small convenience stores, and a community garden. Several commercial properties are currently vacant. The area is currently zoned primarily for low- and medium-density residential development, with instances of commercial zoning (B2 and B3) between George and Morton streets, and smaller nodes at Winifred and Annapolis streets. Residential uses are predominantly single-family homes, with more multi-family types between Stevens and Morton streets.

In 2016, the West Side Community Organization (WSCO) commissioned the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota to complete the Stryker-George: Plan for Action, calls for revitalization of the Corridor. Based on recommendations from that document, on January 9, 2017, WSCO requested that the Department of Planning and Economic Development undertake a zoning study to explore rezoning portions of the Corridor to support a mixed-use district, allow for a wider range of residential uses, and decrease vacancies by zoning for more flexible land use.

The following City-adopted plans provide guidance for development along Stryker Avenue:

- The *Stryker George Precinct Plan* (June 2005) as well as the *Stryker George Precinct Plan Summary*, adopted as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan in April 2006, envisions a medium-density, primarily residential, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood with "a mix of uses in an urban configuration, including some combination of commercial, office, entertainment, transit, parking and housing." Additionally, these plans have objectives to "promote reuse and rehabilitation of vacant structures," and "encourage the retention of as much of the building stock and land uses (except for surface parking) as possible."
- The *2013 West Side Community Plan* calls for a balance of land uses that provide opportunities for "housing, commercial, industrial, ecological, agricultural and green space needs of the community," (LU1) as well as promoting "development that maintains the traditional urban form and respects the unique topography of the West Side." (LU3) The Plan also includes transportation objectives and strategies for the investment and improvement of a multi-modal network (T1-4). The plan includes housing objectives and strategies to "provide a range of housing options" (H1), "preserve and improve the existing housing stock" (H2), and "expand access to affordable homeownership" (H3). The Plan also includes a business development strategy to invest resources in the Stryker/George commercial area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommend that the Planning Commission initiate a 40-acre zoning study for the area bound by Congress Street, Hall Avenue, Annapolis Street, and Winslow Avenue. The purpose of the study is to explore the rezoning of residential and commercial parcels in this area to allow for mixed-use development on Stryker Avenue that is consistent with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, the West Side Community Plan and the Stryker George Precinct Plan.

Attachments:

- Zoning Study Request Letter from West Side Community Organization
- Future Land Use Map from 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- Current Zoning and Proposed Study Area Map
- *Stryker-George: Plan for Action* Recommendations



West Side Community Organization (District 3)
Baker Center | 209 Page Street West
Saint Paul, MN, 55107

January 9, 2017

TO: Saint Paul Planning Commission
FROM: West Side Community Organization Board of Directors
RE: Request for a zoning study of Stryker Avenue

Greetings Planning Commissioners,

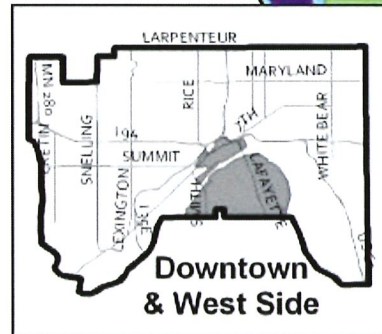
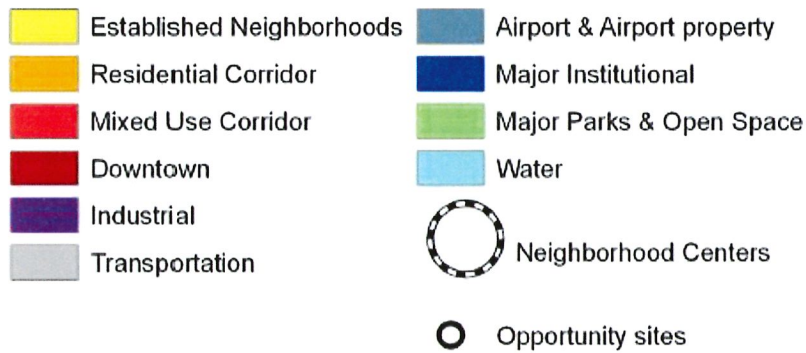
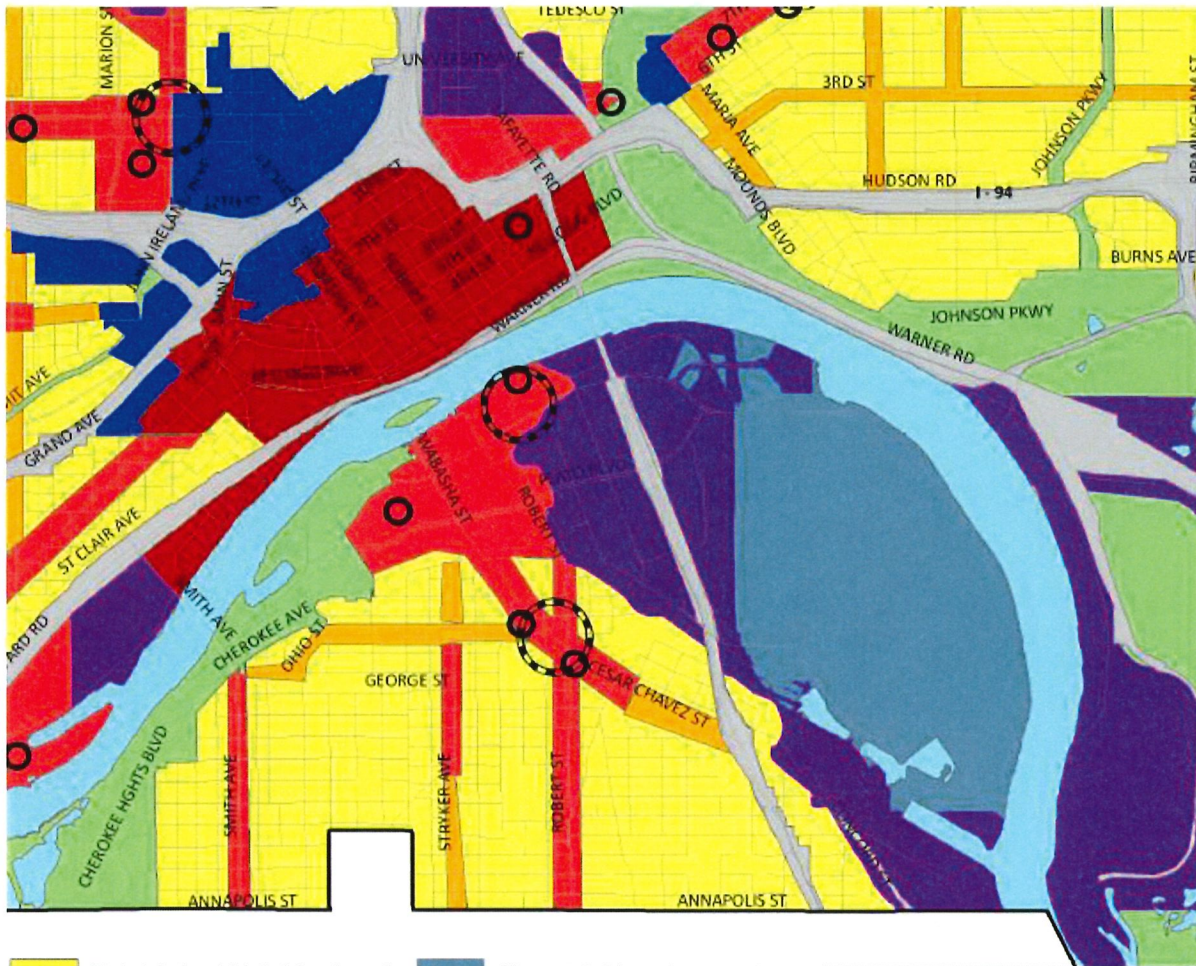
We write to express our desire of a zoning study, and potential rezoning, of Stryker Avenue between Morton Street West and Winifred Street West on Saint Paul's West Side. This request is the result of a year-long collaboration between the West Side Community Organization, staff at the city's Department of Planning and Economic Development, and the Ward 2 office. Specifically, we would like staff to explore the possibility of rezoning commercial areas currently zoned as B2 Community Business or B3 General Business to a TN2 Traditional Neighborhood with designated boundaries.

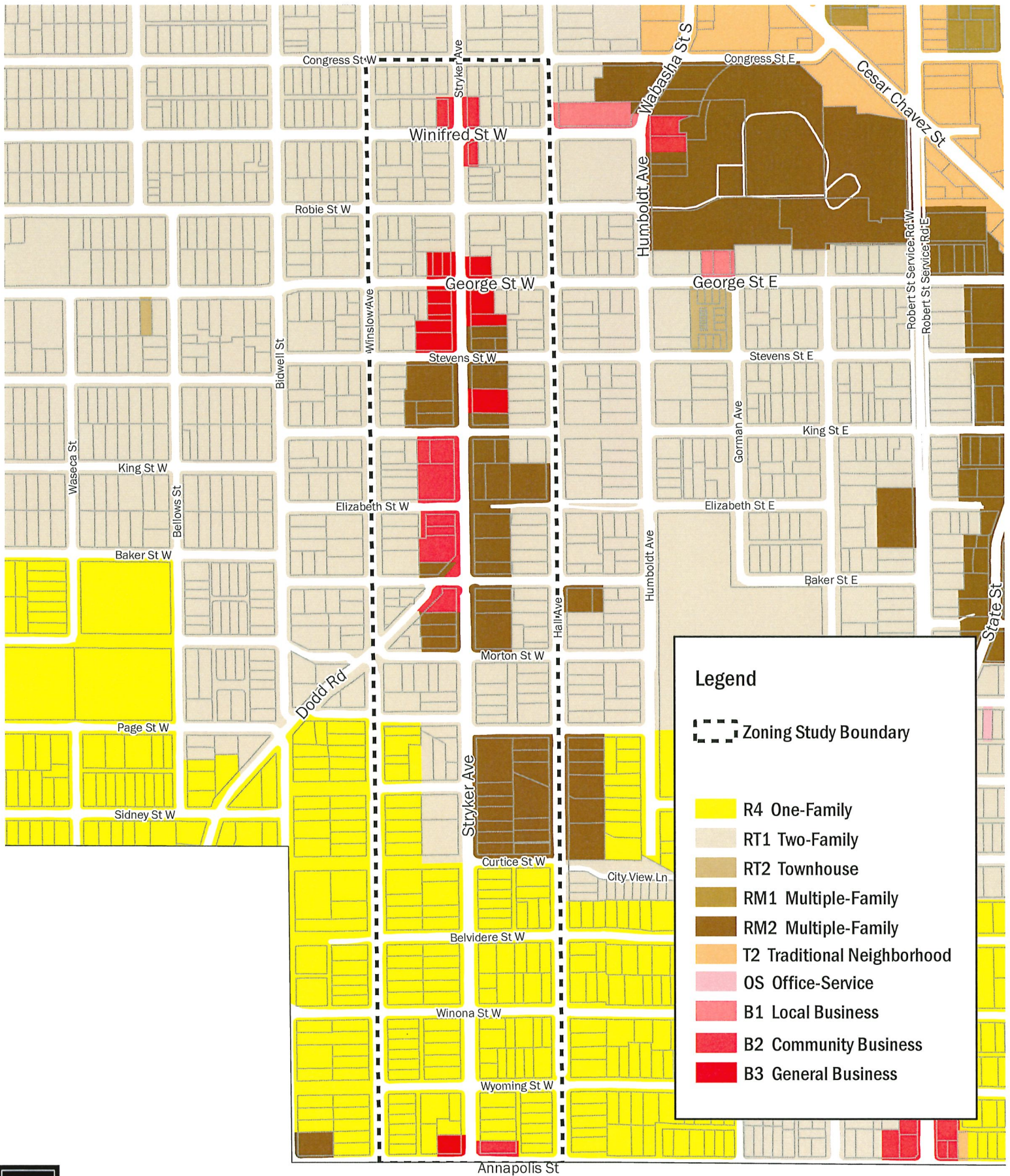
Stryker Avenue is one of four commercial corridors in Saint Paul's West Side neighborhood. Currently, 45% of the commercial properties on Stryker Avenue between Morton Street and Winifred Street are vacant (5 properties totaling over 15,000 square feet). Further, there are many gaps in the commercial properties along the avenue due to residential properties and natural/environmental barriers. This limits mixed-use redevelopment of these sites, which is of interest to West Siders and identified as a priority in The West Side Community Plan (adopted as an addendum to Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan in 2013).

WSCO surveyed over 100 residents who live near Stryker about their retail and service needs, transportation uses, and other ways to improve Stryker Avenue. Nearly all (over 90%) would like to see both commercial revitalization (new small businesses) as well as new residential options, especially for seniors. New development in this area will improve neighborhood safety, and could help to expand bus service for Metro Transit's 75 route.

We ask the Planning Commission to approve a zoning study of Stryker Avenue to take place in 2017, and make recommendations to better align the land use with community needs and plans.

West Side Future Land Use Map





Stryker Avenue Zoning Study **Current Zoning: June 2018**

This document was prepared by the Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development Department and is intended to be used for reference and illustrative purposes only. This drawing is not a legally recorded plan, survey, official tax map or engineering schematic and is not intended to be used as such. Data source: Hill Histori District Feature Class, St. Paul Enterprise GIS, July 2017



Recommendations

Stryker Ave presents numerous challenges in cultivating a more active and thriving commercial corridor. Vacant commercial spaces and undesired retail activity result in basic retail needs not being met within the community. Inadequate access to basic goods and services, such as fresh and healthy food options, is only further exacerbated by limited public transit opportunities and frequency. A lack of public investment is having substantial negative costs as result, as private investment is stymied while the community remains underserved and unaddressed. Current retail and housing density along Stryker Ave doesn't support increasing transit frequency or options, while also making it difficult to attract new retail tenant's dependent on a steady stream of pedestrian foot traffic and active commercial corridor.

The commercial viability of the corridor is thus in decline, with vacant commercial spaces scattered at many places along the corridor. The neglect of public and private sector investment has developed an environment in which crime and safety are consistent concerns identified by people within the community. A few properties were identified as being "troubled" properties, which can be confirmed by data⁷ from Saint Paul PED staff and a quick Google search of the "Stryker Market." 567 Stryker Ave, 65 George St, 605 Stryker Ave, and 637 Stryker Ave are commercial properties with multiple complaints in 2016, ranging from garbage and abandoned vehicles to graffiti and mice infestations.

Implementing specific small-scale strategies to not only attract new tenants, but also in developing a *safer environment* through the use of urban design principles such as "eyes on the street," activity generators such as new public spaces, or increasing population density through new housing should be initiatives pursued by WSCO.

The St. Paul Comprehensive Plan⁸ identifies ways to develop mixed-use corridors that include:

- **LU 1.21** Balance the following objectives for Mixed-Use Corridors through the density and scale of development: accommodating growth, supporting transit use and walking, providing a range of housing types, and providing housing at densities that support transit.
- **LU 1.28** Promote conditions that support those who live and work along Mixed-Use Corridors, including frequent transit service, vibrant business districts, and a range of housing choices.
- **LU 1.40** Promote the development of housing that provides choices for people of all ages, including singles and young couples, families, empty-nesters, and seniors.
- **LU 1.42** Promote the development of housing in Mixed-Use neighborhoods that supports walking and the use of public transportation.
- **LU 1.46** Encourage the expansion of compact commercial areas in Neighborhood Centers and Mixed-Use Corridors to further the objectives of both categories of neighborhoods.
- **LU 1.52** Prioritize the development of compact commercial areas accessible by pedestrians and transit users over commercial areas more readily accessed by automobile. Discourage new and expanded auto-oriented uses.
- **LU 1.53** Encourage changes to the design of existing auto-oriented commercial buildings and areas with elements of traditional urban form to minimize impacts on the pedestrian realm.

Taking these strategies into consideration, an approach should be followed that focuses not only on attracting new tenants, but developing a corridor that includes increasing housing density, expanding public transit options, and other improvements that guide Stryker Ave while transitioning into a more identifiable mixed-use commercial corridor. Rezoning the corridor would help address any land use regulations limiting opportunities to increase both commercial and residential density along Stryker Ave.

Priority Nodes

Focusing improvements and guiding higher-density development and activities should be specific to “priority nodes,” particularly intersections where commercial and pedestrian activity are already the greatest. The intersections of **Stryker & George** and **Stryker & Elizabeth** are areas in which current commercial density is highest, though the topography near Elizabeth Hill on the eastern side of Stryker Ave and Elizabeth St place major constraints on development opportunities (Fig. 19). **Stryker & Winifred** and the portion of **Stryker Ave between George and King St** are the next two locations in which focused improvements may be most beneficial.



Figure 19: East side of Stryker Ave shown on left of photo

Following findings from the survey, seeking out businesses offering healthy food options or places to dine (coffee/café, restaurant/bar) should be pursued. Developing a safer environment by adding more businesses and increasing pedestrian traffic along Stryker Ave should be focused on select nodes, while also addressing large gaps in the infrastructure that make the pedestrian experience unnerving.

Certain elements could be included as new development occurs to help address community concerns along Stryker Ave:

- “Eyes on the street” to address safety/crime concerns (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
- Promote arts and culture to attract businesses and make a more attractive environment
- Add density (housing) and public spaces to increase pedestrian traffic
- Activity generators to increase pedestrian traffic
- “Lowest hanging fruit”
- Compatible mixed land uses
- Social capital
- Leverage cultural assets