



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**

*Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor*

25 West Fourth Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

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

February 16, 2016

Mayor Christopher B. Coleman  
City Council President Russ Stark and Councilmembers  
Third Floor – City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Saint Paul Planning Commission, it is my privilege to send you and the citizens of Saint Paul our 2015 Annual Report.

As the economy has rebounded, more of the work of the Planning Commission and staff has been focused on planning for redevelopment areas and projects. The West Side Flats Master Plan, adopted in 2015, will guide redevelopment of this important area across the Mississippi River from downtown. The plan envisions a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood that is now taking shape with completion of the first phase West Side Flats Apartments. Multi-year planning for the Gold Line BRT along Interstate-94 continues, and in 2015 the Planning Commission recommended station area plans and property rezonings for 5 stations planned in Saint Paul. The focus on major redevelopment areas, including both Snelling-Midway and the Ford Site, will continue into 2016. A soccer stadium site plan and master plan for Snelling-Midway will be at the Planning Commission for review in late spring, followed by a public realm plan and new zoning for the Ford site.

Zoning studies and review of zoning applications also constitute important, on-going work of the Commission. In 2015 these included amendments to the parkland dedication requirements, zoning changes in the commercial areas of the Hamline Midway neighborhood, and amendments to residential design standards in Ward 3 and citywide. The Commission also reviewed 60 zoning applications, the highest total since 2011. Approval of the new citywide Bicycle Plan in early 2015 was followed by design work on two major bicycle infrastructure projects, the Grand Round and Capital City Bikeway. Planning commissioners are serving on the community advisory committees for both.

These are selected highlights of the Planning Commission's work in 2015. On behalf of the Planning Commission, we thank you for the opportunity to serve the City and engage the community in the important work of planning for the future of Saint Paul.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Wencil  
Planning Commission Chair

# Saint Paul Planning Commission

## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

[www.stpaul.gov/ped](http://www.stpaul.gov/ped)

### ABOUT THE SAINT PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission is a 21-member advisory body made up of citizen volunteers appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The Planning Commission and its Zoning, Comprehensive Planning, Neighborhood Planning, and Transportation Committees take on municipal planning issues as required by law. It reviews and makes recommendations on comprehensive planning and zoning issues, studies, and amendments. It also holds public hearings where members of the public can be heard.

This Annual Report provides a summary of the Planning Commission's major activities and accomplishments in 2015.

### Completed Projects

#### Ward 3 and Citywide Residential Design Standards

In August of 2014, City Council initiated a zoning study to review current design standards in Ward 3 as they relate to the construction and remodeling of single-family homes. The study was initiated in response to a concern that the height and scale of recent single-family home construction was out of character with the surrounding established neighborhood. Following an in-depth study and community engagement process, the Planning Commission recommended and City

Council adopted amendments to the zoning code related to single-family residential standards both in Ward 3 and citywide. The amendments went into effect in September of 2015.

#### Hamline Midway Mixed Use Corridors Study

At the request of the Hamline Midway Coalition, the Planning Commission completed the Hamline Midway Mixed Use Corridors Zoning Study in 2015. The study looked at the zoning along Snelling and Hamline Avenues between University Avenue and Pierce Butler Route, and along Minnehaha and Thomas Avenues between Snelling and Hamline Avenues. The purpose of



the study was to determine whether the zoning was optimal for meeting Comprehensive and District plan goals for corridor and neighborhood development, and considered factors such as land use, parcel size and configuration, building types, planned transit improvements, and general market trends. The study ultimately recommended a number of zoning amendments, primarily converting B2 (general business) and RM2 (multifamily) districts to T2 (traditional neighborhood) districts. The zoning changes were enacted by the City Council in May 2015.

#### West Side Flats Master Plan and Rezonings

The Planning Commission completed its review of the updated West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines in February 2015, recommending a series of changes to address concerns raised by businesses in the industrial area. The Planning Commission also recommended the rezoning of approximately 35 parcels to T3M (Traditional Neighborhood with master plan) and ITM (Industrial with master plan) to comply with the Master Plan. In June 2015, the final West Side Flats Master Plan and Development Guidelines and rezonings were adopted by the City Council.



View looking north showing future potential development character along Robert Street.

## Parkland Dedication Amendments

The Planning Commission held a public hearing and recommended amendments to the City's parkland dedication requirements. The amendments increase the amount of parkland dedicated at the time of platting and change the way the amount of land (or fee in lieu of land) is calculated. The amendments separate parkland dedication requirements from the amount of parking, and instead base them on the number of new dwelling units for residential development and the amount of new floor area of commercial and industrial development. They also reduce the maximum amount of land to be dedicated at the time of building permits and increase the fee in lieu of land from 33% to 100% of the value of the land. The amendments were adopted by the City Council in August.

## District 10 Como Community Plan

In November of 2015, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the District 10 Como Community Plan as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The plan was developed through a community-based process, and adopted by the District 10 Como Community Council Board of Directors earlier in 2015. The plan includes chapters on housing and land use, parks, transportation, environment, and business.

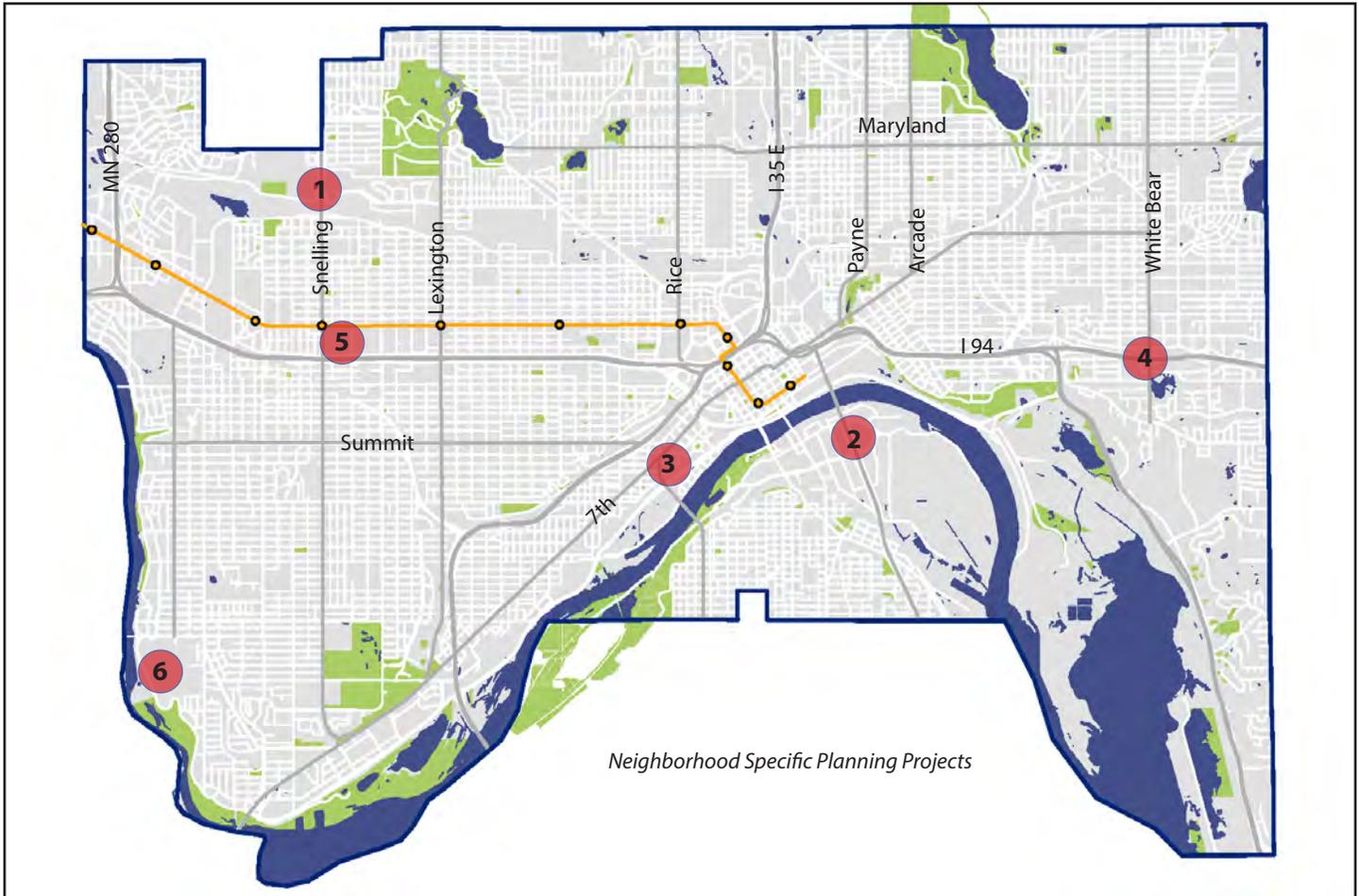
## Saint Paul Bike Plan

The Transportation Committee and Planning Commission reviewed and approved the Saint Paul Bike Plan and recommended its approval to City Council. This was the first comprehensive plan for bike infrastructure in the City. The top priorities recommended in the Plan were to complete the Grand Round and finalize plans for

a bike network downtown. Both projects are since underway. Planning Commissioner Terri Thao is co-chair of the Grand Round Community Advisory Committee.

## Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) Rulemaking

In 2013, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) restarted rulemaking for the MRCCA. The MRCCA was originally designated for protection by Governor's Executive Order in 1979, and Saint Paul adopted river corridor zoning ordinances pursuant to the Executive Order in 1983. If new rules are adopted, the City of Saint Paul will be required to adopt new zoning and regulations consistent with the rules. The rules would set minimum standards for new development, including regulation of building heights and development setbacks, land disturbance, and vegetation management. It is expected that new MRCCA rules will be





The Stone Saloon located at 445 Smith ave. Saint Paul's first historic use variance.

adopted by the end of 2016, and that subsequent planning and adoption of new ordinances in Saint Paul will take at least one additional year from the time of rule adoption.

### Stone Saloon Historic Use Variance

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In September, the Commission recommended conditional approval of a historic use variance application to operate a microbrewery and restaurant on residentially zoned property at 445 Smith Avenue. It was the City's first historic use variance application since the authorizing ordinance was passed in June as a way to support appropriate reuse of locally designated historic buildings.

### Cellular Antennas Zoning Study

The Planning Commission initiated a zoning study in January 2015 to update its cellular antenna regulations in response to changes in federal rules as well as to changes in local land use patterns over the past 10-15 years. In March, the Commission made its recommendations for Zoning Code amendments, which were adopted by the City Council in May.

### Gold Line Station Area Plans and Rezoning

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In August, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the Gold Line Station Area Plans and associated rezonings of 246 properties that will guide land use changes, infrastructure provision, and housing policy along the planned Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit project (under study by other government agencies) on the north side of I-94 through Saint Paul's East Side. The draft plans and rezoning proposals were created through a community task force co-chaired by Planning Commissioner Trevor Oliver and also including Planning Commission Chair Barbara Wencil that met 16 times to guide the process and make recommendations. The City Council approved the plans and rezonings in October.



Gold Line Task Force meeting.

## Ongoing Projects

### Snelling-Midway Redevelopment

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Major League Soccer announced their intent to locate a new professional soccer franchise in Minnesota. The team ownership group selected the Metropolitan Council's property at I-94 and Snelling as their preferred location and have partnered with the adjacent property owner to create a master plan for the area that will guide the design of the stadium and redevelopment of the area. The stadium is expected to be a catalyst for additional development that will help to realize the vision of the Snelling Station Area Plan. Planning Commissioner Julie Padilla is co-chair of the community advisory committee helping to guide the development of the master plan. The Master Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission in 2016.

### Ford Plant Redevelopment

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The Ford plant property moved significantly closer to being market ready in 2015. In 2013, the Planning Commission approved a master site plan for decommissioning, which guided final building and slab removals and seeding of 60% of the property. Staff from multiple City departments met monthly and worked in subgroups to oversee a jobs strategy study, an energy system study, and a stormwater management study. Eight large public meetings and multiple task

force meetings addressed specific redevelopment topics and solicited extensive public input to shape priorities for the site zoning and a public realm master plan, which will be drafted for public review in 2016. The eight public meetings had an average attendance of 100 people, with 2,570 people currently on the email list for meeting and project notifications. Staff from multiple departments continue

to be engaged in an ongoing traffic study, a market study, infrastructure cost estimate study, environmental review, and consultation with a real estate advisory firm. The Ford Task Force and large public meetings will continue throughout 2016 to learn about study findings, to review zoning and public realm plans, and provide input and recommendations on Ford items coming before the Planning

The Planning Commission is staffed by the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED).

Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Director, PED  
 Donna Drummond, Planning Director  
 Sonja Butler, Secretary to the Planning Commission

**2015 Planning Commissioners**

- Barbara A. Wencil (Chair)
- Pat Connolly (to Aug. 2015)
- Anne DeJoy
- Daniel Edgerton
- Gene Gelgelu
- William Lindeke
- Kyle Makarios
- Melanie McMahon
- Paula Merrigan
- Gaius Nelson
- Rebecca Noecker
- Christopher Ochs
- Trevor Oliver
- Julie Padilla
- Betsy Reveal
- Emily Shively
- Terri Thao
- Wendy Underwood
- Jun-Li Wang
- Daniel Ward II
- David Wickiser



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For more information:  
 Department of Planning and Economic Development  
 1400 City Hall Annex  
 25 West Fourth Street  
 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102  
 Tel: 651.266.6573  
<http://www.stpaul.gov/ped>



Ford site demolition 2015.

The Zoning Committee reviewed 60 cases in 2015, up 5 percent from 2014. In addition to the rezoning cases initiated by property owners, the Department of Planning and Economic Development and the Planning Commission proactively rezone properties by conducting zoning studies and creating small area plans.

