



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
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**DATE:** March 3, 2017  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Comprehensive Planning Committee  
**SUBJECT:** Central Station Block Design Guidelines

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### **BACKGROUND**

The Central Station Block is bounded by Cedar, Minnesota, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets in downtown Saint Paul. It is the location of Central Station, one of the three busiest LRT stations along the Green Line. In 2006, the environmental review process for the Green Line determined that there is a district in downtown, the Saint Paul Urban Renewal Historic District, that is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Central Station Block sits at the center of the Urban Renewal Historic District.

Building Central Station and putting the LRT tracks at a diagonal through the block required the demolition of the First Federal Savings and Loan Building at 360 Cedar Street, a contributing building within the Urban Renewal Historic District. Demolition of the building was found to constitute an “adverse effect” on the District, requiring mitigation before the LRT project could proceed. The mitigation agreed to by all parties involved in the project was preparation of redevelopment design guidelines for the Central Station Block. The design guidelines will guide future development so that it is compatible with the defining features of the Urban Renewal Historic District, as well as those of adjacent, early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings also determined eligible for the National Register, such as the St. Paul Athletic Club, First National Bank Building and Minnesota Building.

Per the Programmatic Agreement for the Green Line, the Metropolitan Council, as the agency that built and operates the Green Line, was given the responsibility to prepare the Central Station Block design guidelines. The Metropolitan Council delegated oversight of the project and adoption of the results to the City of Saint Paul, since the City will ultimately administer the guidelines.

The City issued a Request for Proposals for preparation of the Central Station Block redevelopment design guidelines in February 2016, and selected Winter & Co. in March 2016. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was created to advise the work of staff and the consultants. The TAC had representatives from CapitolRiver Council (District 17), BOMA, Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation, Metro Transit and three City departments (PED, Public Works and Parks and Recreation). It participated in a half-day workshop to discuss design influences on the block and general options for massing, scale and form, and reviewed a preliminary draft of the guidelines.

## **CENTRAL STATION BLOCK DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Both the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* (2007) and *Downtown Station Area Plan* (2010) envision significant development on the Central Station Block. LRT is seen as a catalyst for high-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development at Central Station, along with high-quality public space. Further, the City of Saint Paul and Metropolitan Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 that contains shared redevelopment goals and objectives for the block; these shared goals echo the redevelopment envisioned in City plans.

The design guidelines are recommended for adoption as an amendment to the *Downtown Station Area Plan* (2010). They provide more detail on redevelopment of the block so that it responds to its location in the Urban Renewal Historic District as well as its proximity to significant buildings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These historic influences impact the massing, form, height and materials of new development; they do not speak to land use. Permitted and conditional land uses are still regulated by zoning.

The draft guidelines are attached for your review. Other minor revisions will be made to the body of the *Downtown Station Area Plan* to refer to the Appendix (Table of Contents, Section 3.1 and Section 4.4) so that the guidelines have the same legal status as the rest of the document (i.e. part of the Comprehensive Plan).

The Central Station Block design guidelines consist of:

- Historic context – a brief description of the historic influences on the block, including both early-20<sup>th</sup>-century and mid-century modern periods in architecture and urbanism
- Design framework and design principles – 11 design principles that set general parameters for new building and site design on the block
- Design guidelines for new development – guidelines to direct site planning, architectural character, building design, massing and form, exterior building materials, public space activation and structured parking.
- Infill development scenarios – application of the guidelines in four possible development scenarios
- Circulation – how private development and public spaces should provide for pedestrian, bike and transit use
- Open space – how public open space should be provided on the block and incorporated into other activities on the block (transit and private development)
- Public art – how public art should be used to add vibrancy to new development.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

The Comprehensive Planning Committee recommends that the Planning Commission release the draft Central Station Block Design Guidelines for public review and set a public hearing for April 21, 2017.

1. Website link: *Central Station Block Design Guidelines*

<https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/CentralStationBlockDesignGuidelines%203-10-17.pdf>