

City of Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan: Land Use Chapter – Working Draft

August 25, 2017

[Updated from August 17, 2017 draft. The updates reflect comments received from the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Changes are indicated with yellow highlight and explanations are in italics.]

Chapter Intent

The Land Use Chapter is intended to provide guidance on the overall physical layout and organization of the city. As Saint Paul has developed, land uses have changed in conjunction with transportation trends, and evolving zoning regulations and market forces. The land uses have developed over time and have a close relationship to natural forms and systems within the city, including the Mississippi River. The overall composition of these natural and built characteristics of the city influence how people live, move, and do business in Saint Paul. This chapter provides guidance by land use type and is illustrated by the Future Land Use Map, which determines where the uses are to be located. The land use types are described throughout the chapter, followed by policies that will guide each use for the next ten years. Policies set forth in this chapter promote development patterns that strengthen neighborhoods; increase walkability; increase access to housing, jobs, schools, parks and services; promote equitable access to neighborhood centers; and accommodate growth by leveraging transit investments. Household and employment growth over the next 20+ years is focused in Downtown, Mixed-Use areas and Neighborhood Nodes creating compact urban development in areas with a high level of service and amenities, while supporting ongoing investment in Urban Neighborhoods.

The following goals guide the Land Use Chapter:

- Economic and population growth through focused growth around transit.
- Neighborhood Nodes that support daily needs within walking distance.
- Equitably-distributed community amenities, access to employment and housing choice.
- Strong connections to the Mississippi River, parks and trails.
- Infrastructure for all ages and abilities.
- Efficient and adaptable land use and development patterns and processes.
- Quality jobs and livable wages.
- People-centered urban design.

Policies

City-wide

City-wide land use policies cover a broad range of topics. Generally the city-wide goals are to increase density and land use diversity at Neighborhood Nodes, focus investment along transit corridors, and promote high-quality urban design. Mixed-use clusters anchor neighborhoods, provide convenient access to local services and employment and promote vibrancy, which supports walking and reduces the amount of driving needed to satisfy daily needs. The following policies apply across the city regardless of land use category:

[Citywide policies reordered to improve readability]

- **Policy LU-1.** Encourage transit-supportive density and direct the majority of growth to areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity. *[Sidebar illustration of the benefits of density to come; Table of units/acre to come]*
- **Policy LU-2.** Redevelop Opportunity Sites as higher-density mixed-use development or employment centers with increased job intensity. *[Map of Opportunity Sites to come]*
- **Policy LU-3.** Prioritize equitable public investments relative to areas of concentrated poverty as defined by the Metropolitan Council. *[Map of Areas of Concentrated Poverty to come; Sidebar about how to apply Policy LU-3 to come]*
- **Policy LU-4.** Invest in measures that minimize displacement in neighborhoods where the proximity to high-frequency transit has increased redevelopment pressure and/or housing costs. *[Policy moved from Urban Neighborhood section]*
- **Policy LU-5.** Encourage flexible building design to ensure on-going functionality and viability, and to respond to new market opportunities.
- **Policy LU-6.** Implement the City's Economic Strategy, by supporting land uses that:
 1. Facilitate business attraction, retention and expansion.
 2. Increase the number of jobs in Saint Paul, and access to jobs, training and opportunity for residents.
 3. Grow Saint Paul's tax base in order to maintain and expand City services, amenities and infrastructure.
 4. Proactively direct new development to high-priority geographies, such as Neighborhood Nodes and Opportunity Sites.
 5. Enhance downtown as a walkable and vibrant neighborhood, with a strong sense of place, healthy commerce sector and high-amenity housing choices.
 6. Support neighborhood business growth.*[Sidebar about Economic Strategy to come. Include hotlink to Economic Strategy.]*
- **Policy LU-7.** Evaluate land *and zoning use flexibility to respond to social, economic, technological,* market and environmental changes, conditions and opportunities.
- **Policy LU-8.** Ensure that zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development.
- **Policy LU-9.** Promote high-quality urban design that supports pedestrian friendliness and enhances the public realm.
- **Policy LU-10.** Activate streetscapes with lively commercial spaces, public art, outdoor commercial uses and other uses that contribute to street life.
- **Policy LU-11.** Preserve significant publicly-accessible views through regulation of structure placement, height, bulk and scale. *[Map of Views to come]*
- **Policy LU-12.** Support airport safety by prioritizing compatible land uses and ensuring that building heights do not unreasonably interfere with airspace operations close to Saint Paul Downtown Airport and Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport.
- **Policy LU-13.** Support strategies to improve off-street parking efficiency, such as shared parking agreements, district ramps, car sharing and reduced parking minimums as context and technology allow.

- **Policy LU-14.** Ensure that stand-alone parking uses are limited, and that structured parking is mixed-use and/or convertible to other uses.
- **Policy LU-15.** Encourage the equitable spatial distribution of community food assets, including community gardens, food markets, healthy retail food options, and food hubs.
- **Policy LU-16.** Promote access to sunlight for solar energy systems while accounting for the development rights of adjacent properties.
- **Policy LU-17.** Support facilities outside public rights-of-way to support pedestrian and bicycling activity, such as sidewalk access to building entrances, adequate lighting, trails and bicycle parking/storage.
- **Policy LU-18.** *[Policy related to City's Climate Action Plan to come]*
- **Policy LU-19.** Encourage private landowners to provide public access to privately-owned open spaces, and facilitate joint use of athletic fields and school playgrounds, to improve neighborhood access to such facilities and open space.

Downtown

Downtown is the mixed-use core of the city and encompasses Planning District 17. It is the oldest developed part of the city, and currently and historically has had the greatest employment and housing density. Downtown is intended to continue growing and diversifying while building on its great neighborhood, commercial and cultural assets. Improved infrastructure will enliven vitality, and safely connect people throughout downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. The following policies apply to the Downtown land use category:

- **Policy LU-20.** Continue to invest in Downtown and promote a broad mix of uses that attract greater numbers of people and employers to ensure Downtown's vitality as the civic, cultural and employment center of the East Metro.
- **Policy LU-21.** Strengthen neighborhood connections to and within Downtown Saint Paul through development and improvements that support and complement Downtown businesses and urban villages.
- **Policy LU-22.** Prioritize investments in infrastructure that:
 1. Improve tech access to improve conditions for a growing tech economy.
 2. Maintain and enhance the public realm to encourage street-level pedestrian activity.
- **Policy LU-23.** Maintain Downtown residential neighborhoods with services and amenities for people of all ages.

Mixed-Use

Mixed-Use areas are primarily along thoroughfares well-served by transit. The main distinguishing characteristic is a mix of land uses within the same building or in several buildings within walking distance of each other. Historically, these areas developed in easily-accessible locations and will continue to be the most dynamic areas of the city. These areas are vital for the on-going growth and economic development of the city by providing the highest densities outside of downtown. The following policies apply to the Mixed-Use land use category:

- **Policy LU-24.** Provide for land use change and rezoning of land adjacent to Mixed-Use areas to allow for redevelopment fronting arterial and collector streets.

- **Policy LU-25.** Support pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and visual interest through commercial building design.
- **Policy LU-26.** Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design gradually transition to those permitted in adjoining districts.

Neighborhood Nodes

Neighborhood Nodes are compact, mixed-use areas that provide shops, services, neighborhood civic and institutional uses, recreational facilities and employment close to residences. They may be neighborhood centers, transit station areas, or urban villages and have often historically developed adjacent to major intersections or at former street car stops. They serve a neighborhood’s daily needs including access to food, reduce public infrastructure disparities, improve livability and accommodate growth. The intent is for Neighborhood Nodes to be denser concentrations of development relative to the adjacent future land use categories. Neighborhood Nodes foster an equitable system of compact, mixed-use and commercial centers across the city to increase access to community services and businesses, and create pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. The following policies apply to a range of land uses within the Neighborhood Nodes land use designation:

- **Policy LU-27.** Focus growth at Neighborhood Nodes using the following principles:
 1. Increase density relative to underlying Future Land Use Map categories.
 2. Prioritize pedestrian-friendly urban design and infrastructure that emphasizes pedestrian safety.
 3. Cluster neighborhood amenities to create a vibrant critical mass.
 4. Improve access to jobs.

[Sidebar illustrating Neighborhood Nodes policy to come, include height diagram.]
- **Policy LU-28.** Invest in Neighborhood Nodes to achieve development that enables people to meet their daily needs within walking distance and improves equitable access to amenities, retail and services.
- **Policy LU-29.** Promote amenities that support those who live and work in Neighborhood Nodes, including frequent transit service, vibrant business districts, a range of housing choices, and neighborhood civic and institutional uses such as schools, libraries and recreation facilities.
- **Policy LU-30.** Establish or enhance open space close to Neighborhood Nodes, such as public parks, publicly-accessible private open spaces and school playgrounds.

Urban Neighborhoods

Urban Neighborhoods are primarily residential areas with a range of housing types. Single-family homes and duplexes are the most common, although multi-family housing predominates along arterial and collector streets, particularly those with transit. Multi-family housing, schools, neighborhood parks, religious institutions and cemeteries may also be scattered throughout Urban Neighborhoods. Limited neighborhood-serving commercial may also be present. Urban Neighborhood is the largest land use area in the city. The following policies apply to the Urban Neighborhood land use category:

- **Policy LU-31.** Encourage medium-density housing that diversifies housing options, such as townhouses, courtyard apartments and smaller multi-family developments, compatible with the general scale of Urban Neighborhoods.

- **Policy LU-32.** Provide for multi-family housing along arterial and collector streets to facilitate walking and leverage the use of public transportation.
- **Policy LU-33.** Promote neighborhood-serving commercial businesses within urban neighborhoods that are compatible with the character and scale of the existing residential development.
- **Policy LU-34.** Facilitate partnerships between public and private institutions for joint use of recreational fields, playgrounds and other community facilities and hubs with combined services to economically provide equitable access to services while minimizing reduction of tax base.
- **Policy LU-35.** Direct the location of new secondary schools and post-secondary educational institutions along transit routes and bicycle and pedestrian networks to provide options for students and staff, and decrease traffic congestion in adjacent neighborhoods.
- **Policy LU-36.** Direct the location of new elementary schools to locations with safe pedestrian and bicycling networks to support walking and biking to school.

Semi-Rural

Semi-Rural land is primarily large-lot, low-density residential, with more limited public infrastructure than elsewhere in the city. Development is limited by the river bluffs; preservation of green space, including the tree canopy, is emphasized. The Semi-Rural land use category is limited by geography, and is expected to remain static or even shrink over the next 20 years as properties are connected to public utilities and infrastructure. The following policies apply to the Semi-Rural land use category:

- **Policy LU-37.** Maintain large-lot residential development with private utilities that preserves the natural ecosystem along the river bluffs.
- **Policy LU-38.** Allow for cluster development with public utilities that preserves the natural ecosystem along the river bluffs.

Industrial

Industrial land use has traditionally hosted manufacturing, processing, warehousing and utilities. More contemporary uses, driven by technological advances, include medical tech and small-scale production. Industrial land uses are a major source for employment in Saint Paul. The intent is for this land use type remain adaptable, relevant and contribute to a growing employment and tax base of the city. The following policies apply to the Industrial land use category:

- **Policy LU-39.** Support and encourage brownfield redevelopment that increases tax base.
- **Policy LU-40.** Retain and protect current industrial land from conversions to residential or institutional uses unless they are high-density, close to high-frequency transit or along the Mississippi River, and accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians.
- **Policy LU-41.** Preserve the long-term tax base by evaluating the impact of tax-generating industrial land, as well as compatibility with adjacent land uses and infrastructure, before facilitating its conversion to tax-exempt uses.
- **Policy LU-42.** Consolidate surface parking in older industrial districts.
- **Policy LU-43.** Pursue partnerships to improve public open space access along the Mississippi River.
- **Policy LU-44.** Support efforts to convert former industrial buildings to complementary uses.

- **Policy LU-45.** Support efforts to combine small parcels in industrial zones in order to allow for uses requiring larger building footprints.
- **Policy LU-46.** Limit industrial uses abutting the riverfront to uses that depend on the Mississippi River for business operations.
- **Policy LU-47.** Encourage investment in new employment uses, such as medical technology, maker space and small-scale or custom production.

Major Parks and Open Spaces

Major Parks and Open Space land use includes regional parks, City parks over 200 acres, parkways and the Mississippi River corridor. This land use designation helps to connect the city and acts as the “lungs” of the city, contributing to environmental quality, and providing space for recreation and respite. See Parks Chapter for policies on parks and open spaces.

Civic and Institutional

Civic and Institutional land use includes buildings and open space for major institutional campuses. As the host of the State Capitol and many high-quality educational institutions, Saint Paul has great riches in Civic and Institutional land uses. It is important to cultivate conditions that allow these uses to thrive, connect to neighborhoods and feed into the local economy. The following policies apply to the Civic and Institutional land use category:

- **Policy LU-48.** Pursue partnerships with area colleges and universities that strengthen connections to the community and adjacent neighborhoods to support workforce development, business creation and innovation, and retention of youth and young professionals.
- **Policy LU-49.** Ensure institutional campuses are compatible with their surrounding neighborhoods by managing parking demand and supply, maintaining institution-owned housing stock, minimizing traffic congestion, and providing for safe pedestrian and bicycle access.
- **Policy LU-50.** Encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots within the Capitol Area to projects that contribute to the tax base and public realm.

Transportation

Transportation land use includes streets, highways, railroads and the Saint Paul Downtown Airport. These uses are essential for interstate commerce and contribute to the regional economy. As such, it is important to provide for these uses while ensuring minimum negative external impacts to adjacent land uses. The following policies apply to the Transportation land use category:

- **Policy LU-51.** Lessen the negative impacts of interstate highways by supporting design interventions, such as “freeway lids” and landscaping and liner buildings on new bridges, that improve connectivity, hide the road and/or reduce pollution.
- **Policy LU-52.** Protect intermodal operations and freight railways from encroachment of other land uses that present conflicts.
- **Policy LU-53.** Use the least amount of land practicable for transportation uses to maximize land for urban development.