

## **Snelling-Midway Community Advisory Committee**

### **Report to the Saint Paul Planning Commission, Mayor and City Council on the Snelling-Midway Master Plan and Stadium Site Plan**

**May 2016 (DRAFT dated 04/22/16)**

**Background** - A site plan for the Minnesota United FC soccer stadium and a master plan for the 34.5 acre Snelling-Midway redevelopment site will soon be presented to the Saint Paul Planning Commission and Saint Paul City Council for review. The goal of the proposed transit oriented development is to create a new urban village surrounding the stadium that includes retail, office, residential, hotel, entertainment, and public open space uses.

To ensure community input was reflected and included in the plans for the proposed development, a Snelling-Midway Community Advisory Committee (SMCAC) was appointed by the Mayor. Input from the community at large was also gathered at public open house meetings held in November, February, and March. An additional public open house is anticipated in June where people can learn about plans for the development and provide comment on the project's environmental review. Input was also received from Open Saint Paul, the City's on-line public input opportunity. This report highlights the SMCAC's involvement and how its ideas, hopes, and concerns were considered and incorporated into the site plan and master plan. This report also presents community concerns that need to be addressed as the process moves forward and the opportunities that still need championing to be realized as development proceeds.

**About the SMCAC** - Members of the community who have a stake in the Midway area of Saint Paul - live, work or visit there - comprise the SMCAC. The 21 community members, plus representatives of Minnesota United FC, RK Midway, and the Metropolitan Council, were appointed by the Mayor, selected from a list of 210 applicants who requested to serve. The role of the SMCAC was to:

- Help determine the community needs and desires for the project
- Review plan concepts and provide input on major design elements and themes
- Bring suggestions from community, stakeholders, and respective organizations to the attention of City staff and officials
- Help communicate project progress to community members
- Provide guidance to City staff on final recommendations for the redevelopment site
- Ensure that the full range of issues are discussed during the design process

**About the SMCAC Process** - The SMCAC held nine meetings from December 2015 to May 2016. SMCAC conversations included discussions of community needs and desires for the redevelopment. The SMCAC also heard presentations on the project plans, designs, and environmental review process and weighed in on what they saw and heard. This input was conveyed to the architects and planners for consideration and incorporation of ideas into the plans.

**SMCAC Recommendation** – We support/endorse the stadium site plan and master plan for the Snelling-Midway redevelopment, but have a number of concerns related to implementation and phasing that we hope the Planning Commission, Mayor, and City Council will work to address prior to final adoption.

### **SMCAC Highlights and Comments**

- Our process allowed us to help shape the vision for the redevelopment of the Snelling-Midway area by providing input as the plans were prepared.
- Our input was informed by what we heard from community members at public open house meetings and through comments on Open Saint Paul.
- The stadium presents a unique opportunity to transform an underutilized shopping center into the transit oriented urban village envisioned in the Snelling Station Area Plan.
- We feel it is important to convey outstanding concerns about the plans since a great amount of uncertainty still exists. Questions about how transportation, neighborhoods, businesses, and employment will be impacted remain, as do questions about phasing and the opportunity for affordable housing. Table 2 talks about these concerns in greater detail.
- We feel that to be successful the development must strive to meet the needs of the existing economically and ethnically diverse populations in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- An efficient transportation system, including safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit and the surrounding neighborhoods and access to parking, is an important component of success, especially on event days at the stadium.

At the beginning of our work, we expressed the following hopes:

- Walkability for all ages with safe connections to transit and crossings at Snelling and University
- Activities for before and after games that can be enjoyed by people of all ages such as restaurants, bars, cultural activities, and a town center area
- Transformative, yet realistic plans for the area
- Connections to broader community
- Development that promotes diversity and innovation
- Housing that is affordable
- A stadium that is used for more than just MLS games

At the beginning of our work, we expressed the following concerns:

- Outreach needs to happen for all parts of the community so that input comes from all and not just those with the loudest voices
- New development needs to serve the existing community
- Existing local businesses will be impacted; need to be sensitive to this
- Lack of understanding by the community of trade-offs of development and how to convey this
- Traffic and parking impacts need to be identified to minimize neighborhood impacts
- Crime and safety concerns for visitors to the site
- Processes/programming should be available during all stages of development

These hopes and concerns continued to be refined as SMCAC discussions continued and as specific plans for the redevelopment were presented. The summary from each of the SMCAC meetings is available on the project webpage at [www.stpaul.gov/midway](http://www.stpaul.gov/midway).

**SMCAC Meetings** - Initial meetings included a review of existing plans and studies for the area and presentations about site conditions, state requirements for environmental review, and the City review and approval process for new development. Key principles for development were generated as well. Subsequent meetings included presentations on the stadium site plan and master plan and many focused discussions about plan details and impacts. Presentations highlighting results from input at public open house meetings, including input from Open Saint Paul, was also a part of the meetings. The Union Park Midway Center Committee Report was presented and discussed. Metro Transit provided information on service in the area. The Capitol Region Watershed District described stormwater management opportunities for the site. The SMCAC learned about the activities of the Snelling-Midway Jobs Workgroup and received details about the agreements approved by the Saint Paul City Council (land lease and development, use, and budget agreements).

**Additional Outreach** – Beyond the SMCAC meetings, community engagement included three public open houses where information was presented and attendees were invited to provide input at topic break-out tables. Input was also received from Open Saint Paul, the City’s online public input opportunity. Summaries of the input received at the open houses and on Open Saint Paul can also be found at [www.stpaul.gov/midway](http://www.stpaul.gov/midway). Additional engagement occurred at Gordon Parks High School, Saint Paul Central High School, Skyline Tower apartment building, Union Park District Council, Community Action Partnership of Washington and Ramsey County, and a workshop hosted by Little AfricaBusiness & Cultural District of Minnesota.

Attendees at these meetings expressed overall excitement and optimism for the proposed plans. However, they also asked questions about project costs and whether existing businesses and jobs would be retained. All were interested in the process for recruiting new businesses and employment to the area and some asked how the community can see halal shops and other ethnic businesses in the development. **INSERT INPUT FROM OUTREACH ON APRIL 26 AND 28**

**Environmental Review** - The timeline and process for environmental review (Alternative Urban Areawide Review-AUAR) frustrated the SMCAC members since *many* of the group’s questions and concerns relating to traffic, parking, and pedestrian circulation hinged on the analysis for the AUAR, and specifically, the transportation study. Unfortunately, the draft AUAR and mitigation plan, including the results of the transportation study, were not complete at the time this report was prepared. This presented a great deal of uncertainty for the members. For this reason the SMCAC strongly encourages the Planning Commission and City Council to carefully and thoughtfully review the AUAR analysis and draft mitigation plan to ensure that the outstanding concerns voiced in this report are considered and addressed prior to final approval of the site plan and master plan.

We feel it is important to note that a public open house meeting to review the draft AUAR and mitigation plan during the comment period is planned for June 7, 2016, 7:00 to 8:30 pm, Concordia

University – Buenger Education Center, 312 Hamline Ave. N., Saint Paul, MN 55104. The comment period is tentatively scheduled to run from May 30 – June 29. All substantive comments from the public must be responded to as part of this process.

**Master Plan** – The master plan provides guidance for site redevelopment and infrastructure projects, both public and private, so that they contribute to achieving the long-term vision laid out for the Snelling-Midway site. It represents the best attempt to articulate a vision for the area by identifying design standards and guidelines as well as street layout, location of parking and open space, and street level look and feel. By not being too prescriptive, the master plan allows for flexibility in what the development will look like. Market forces will play a major role in the ultimate scale of development. If changes to the master plan are desired in the future, a process for that is detailed in the zoning code.

As a result of input provided by the SMCAC and the community, the stadium architect and master planner developed the following design principles to guide the site plan and master plan:

- Transit oriented development – pedestrian first walkable neighborhood
- Amending the street grid and urban fabric with walkable block dimensions
- Emphasis on public open spaces, parks, bike path, four season use
- Mixed-use with 24-7 active retail street fronts
- Sustainable storm water management with green infrastructure and sustainable landscape

The architects and planners noted desirable features for the site such as green space adjacent to the stadium, a dynamic and active neighborhood around the stadium, and a partial roof covering for light and noise abatement and weather protection.

The key goals and principles for the development expressed by the SMCAC are identified in Table 1, along with a summary of how the stadium site plan and master plan respond to them.

**Table 1: Key Goals and Principles for Development\***

<b>Key Goals and Principles Expressed by the SMCAC</b>	<b>How the Stadium Site Plan and Master Plan Respond to the Goals and Principles</b>
Vision for the site should be transformative and realistic	Stadium, street and block pattern, green/open space, broadened mix of uses, and increased density are transformative, yet realistic
Create a unique destination for the neighborhood and region that provides activities for visitors before and after games	Stadium, green/open space, shops, restaurants with outdoor dining, and hotels make for a unique destination for everyday use by neighbors and for visitors from the region and beyond
Increase the density of development	Planned density of site development will be increased, including multi-story office and residential buildings atop retail uses at street level
Broaden the mix of uses	Planned uses include office, retail and restaurant, residential, hotel, cinema, and fitness in addition to the stadium and green/open space
Promote buildings with active uses and	Retail uses planned at street level throughout

transparency at street level	most of the site
Create an urban street block pattern Walkable for people of all ages	Superblock broken into smaller city blocks, weaving the new pattern with the existing streets and incorporating wider sidewalks along Snelling and University and internal sidewalks and dedicated bike lane through the site
Connect to the boarder neighborhood and community	Creating smaller block sizes with sidewalks introduces a human scale to the site that makes a connection to the broader neighborhood and broadened mix of uses appeal to wider community
Design to facilitate walking, biking, and transit use; Pedestrian access to the site from existing neighborhood must feel safe and be walkable with pedestrian scale lighting	Sidewalks and an east-west bike lane established within new block pattern aid walking and biking; wider sidewalks on Snelling and University and a plaza at the intersection to enhance access to transit and pedestrian realm; landscaping and lighting is a component
Easy access for shopping	New street pattern with on street parking, underground parking, bike lane, and sidewalks allow for easy access
Develop high quality green/open spaces that serve as community focal points all year round Pedestrian only areas	“Midway Square” on the south side of University and “Victory Plaza” internal to the site are anticipated to be community focal points that are active all four seasons and pedestrian only areas
Outdoor events, festivals, markets Spaces that invite people to gather and linger Interactive spaces Year round destination spot Cultural town center Place to bring out of town visitors	Midway Square and Victory Plaza green/open space offer places to gather and recreate and could include outdoor events like farmers’ markets and festivals programmed year round including ice skating in winter
A stadium partially below grade could make the scale of the structure more in keeping with surrounding development; limit light and noise from stadium	Stadium pitch is designed to be about 15 feet below grade; stadium height will be about 70 feet above grade; stadium roof designed to limit noise and ambient light
Building and development design should be unique and urban; a suburban look and feel should be avoided	Stadium is a unique design appropriate for an urban setting; future buildings must meet traditional neighborhood zoning and master plan design and dimensional standards
A variety of parking options is important (on street, underground, and ramps); parking should be integrated into buildings and wrapped with active uses	On-street parking is provided; off-street parking is proposed to be underground or in the upper levels of buildings and designed with exterior wall treatments, detailing, windows, and materials that screen the view of vehicles and relate to existing adjacent buildings

\* The SMCAC met nine times from December 2015 through May 2016. The key goals and principles arose from discussions about a vision for redevelopment and were fine-tuned as details of the site plan and master plan emerged. The SMCAC met twice in 2015, December 3 and 17 and seven times in 2016, January 7, February 4, and 18, March 3 and 31, April 28, and May 26. The meeting summaries can be viewed at [www.stpaul.gov/midway](http://www.stpaul.gov/midway)

Beyond the details of the plans for the built environment noted in the table above, there are many outstanding concerns and questions the SMCAC had about how the development will function and what the impact will be to the surrounding neighborhoods. These are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Outstanding Concerns\*\***

<b>Key Concerns about Site Operation Expressed by the SMCAC</b>	<b>How Key Hopes and Concerns for Site Operations Will be Addressed</b>
Safe connections to transit and crossings at Snelling and University	The AUAR will analyze pedestrian circulation. The mitigation plan will identify needed improvements to infrastructure or operations
Safe pedestrian access to trains and BRT	The AUAR will analyze pedestrian circulation. The mitigation plan will identify needed improvements to infrastructure or operations
Safe and efficient queuing of transit users and pedestrians on event days	The AUAR will analyze pedestrian circulation. The mitigation plan will identify needed improvements to infrastructure or operations
Traffic congestion and disruption to existing circulation	The AUAR will analyze vehicular circulation. The mitigation plan will identify needed improvements to infrastructure or operations
Neighborhood impacts: Stadium lighting Stadium noise Traffic noise Building heights and possible shading Spillover parking into neighborhoods (noise, trash)	The AUAR will analyze stadium light and noise as well as traffic noise. The mitigation plan will identify needed improvements to infrastructure or operations. The master planners will study shading to identify impacts to surrounding properties. A community discussion is needed to identify ways to address spillover parking concerns. The mitigation plan will identify how remote parking might be addressed.
Businesses retention, especially locally owned small businesses and minority owned businesses	RK Midway intends to offer space in the new development for existing businesses. Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Workgroup was created to maximize the retention and attraction of jobs and businesses.
Business attraction, especially of locally owned small businesses and minority owned businesses; future businesses should serve the needs of existing residents	Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Workgroup was created to maximize the retention and attraction of jobs and businesses.
Employee retention and attraction; provide high-quality jobs available to local residents	Snelling-Midway Jobs Strategy Workgroup was created to maximize the retention and attraction of jobs and businesses.
Support residential development affordable to a range of incomes	
A stadium that is not just for major league soccer games	Minnesota United FC intends to make the stadium available for some community events

Is the scale of proposed development supported by the market	
Outreach needs to happen for all parts of the community so that input comes from all and not just those with the loudest voices; bring the discussion to more people of color (residents of Skyline Towers, Little Africa businesses, church communities)	SMCAC members helped to communicate project progress to community members. Outreach to Gordon Parks High School, Central High School, Skyline Tower, Little Africa occurred during the time the SMCAC met.
Crime and personal safety could be addressed by locating a police annex within the new development	
Offer more opportunities for questions and answers at open house meetings	Question and answer opportunity was offered at March 15 open house and is planned for the open house meeting on June 7, 2016.
Concern about phasing and how the site will look in the interim after stadium construction but before full master plan build-out	Master plan guidelines and zoning standards and guidelines will shape the scale and look of development in the interim. Each element of any proposed new development will need to function successfully on its own.

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