



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

*25 West Fourth Street, Ste. 1300
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

Telephone: 651-266-6565

DATE: July 19, 2018

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee

RE: Public Realm Updates to Snelling and Westgate Station Area Plans

BACKGROUND

The [Snelling Station Area Plan](#) and [Westgate Station Area Plan](#) were both adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan in 2008. The plans guide public and private investment in the areas around the Snelling and Westgate stations on the Green Line. The Green Line station area plans have a standard format that includes the following sections:

1. the station area today - a description of the current conditions of station at the time the plan was written;
2. the future of the station area – an illustrative vision for the area;
3. public realm – a section focusing on parks and public places;
4. future character areas – definitions of specific areas of built form character;
5. movement – strategies to improve multimodal access within the station area; and
6. getting there – implementation steps to achieve the plan's goals.

This memo focuses on the recommendations in the plans regarding the public realm. The two plans lay out a similar vision to break down super-blocks with new streets and provide new park space as an amenity for future development. They provide for flexibility, recognizing that the precise location of these public investments will adapt over time as markets, resources and opportunities changes.

There have been two recent and unrelated planning efforts to more explicitly define the public realm in conjunction with major development projects within both of these station areas:

1. the Snelling-Midway Master Plan in conjunction with the Allianz Field stadium project in the Snelling Station Area; and
2. the Westgate Public Realm Plan in conjunction with the multi-family housing projects proposed by Dominion at the former Weyerhaeuser Lumber site in the Westgate Station Area.

The following updates to the Snelling Station Area Plan and Westgate Station Area Plan capture the great public effort that went into developing the Snelling-Midway Master Plan and Westgate Public Realm Plan. The majority of the edits update maps and images to reflect the changes to the recommended layout of the public realm. Edits to the text are, for the most part, to support those changes. New text is based on that in the aforementioned documents.

Leveraging these recent planning processes will keep the plans (already 10 years old) relevant for years to come.

SNELLING STATION AREA PLAN UPDATES

Snelling-Midway Master Plan

The [Snelling-Midway Master Plan](#) was approved by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council as an ordinance in 2016. The master plan was developed by RK Midway, Minnesota United FC, S9 Architecture and Populous and reviewed through the Snelling-Midway Community Advisory Committee, a group of 21 community members, in a process led by the Department of Planning and Economic Development with substantial support from other City departments. The committee held nine meetings and hosted four open houses to collect public feedback on the master plan. The Allianz Field stadium and much of the public infrastructure is currently under construction. The adopted plan is illustrated below.

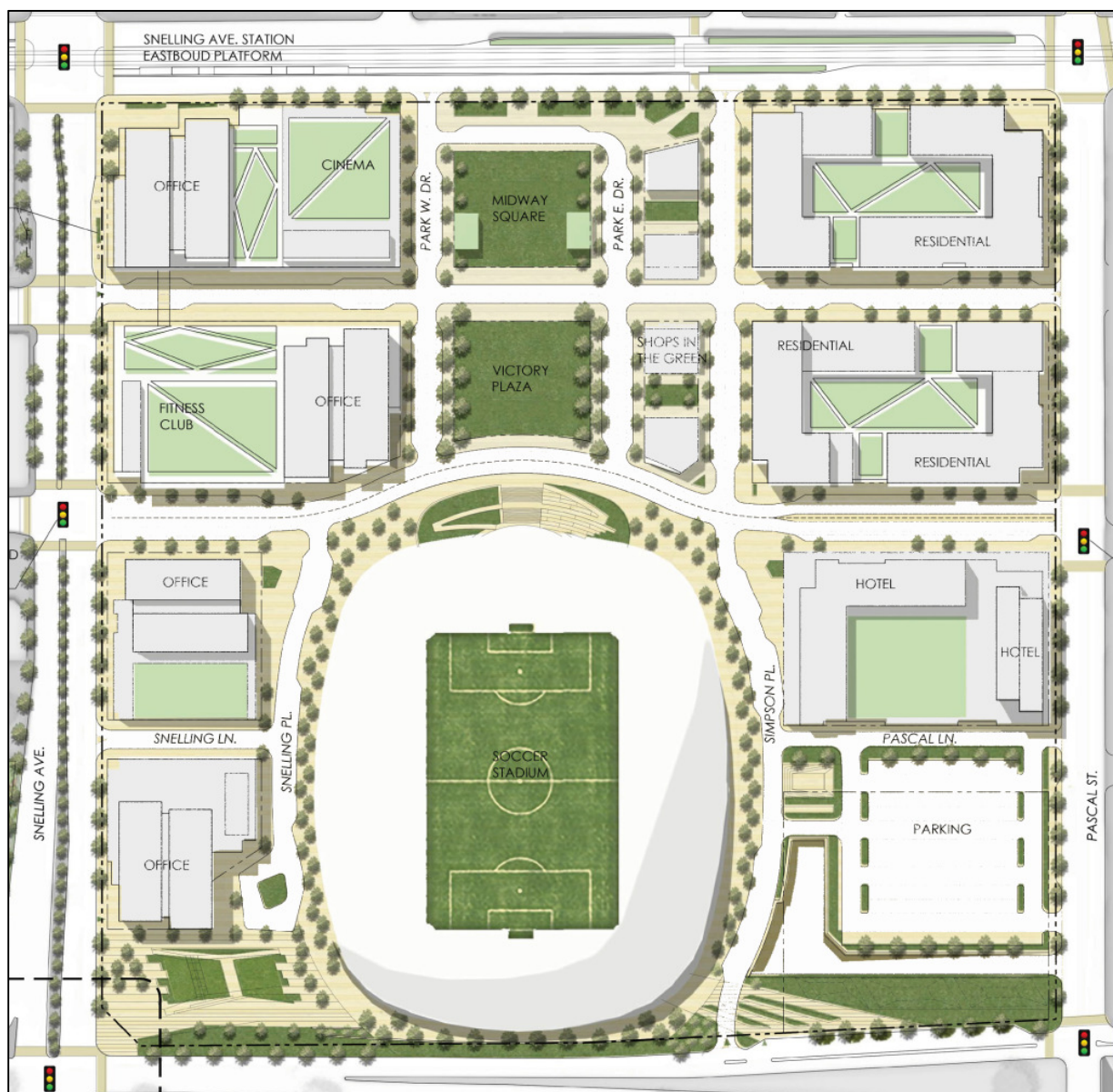


Figure 1: Snelling-Midway Master Plan

Snelling Station Area Plan Updates

P. 13 Update Figure 2.3 - Eastern Boundary of station area was adjusted to Pascal to reflect Hamline Station Area Plan, which was written and adopted after the adoption of the Snelling Station Area Plan (This change is unrelated to the Snelling-Midway Master Plan).

Update second paragraph of “Defining the Study Area” as follows:

The Station Area Boundary extends ~~considerably east of the traditional one-quarter mile boundary~~ to reach Pascal Syndicate and captures much the entirety of the Midway Shopping District. This boundary is the primary focus for all recommendations contained within this document.

P. 15 Update Figure 2.4 to reflect the Snelling-Midway Master Plan.

P. 18 Update Figure 3.1 to reflect the Snelling-Midway Master Plan.

P. 19 Update second paragraph of the first column as follows:

This string of gathering places is connected by an improved hierarchy of public streets and development blocks that could improve the accessibility and connectivity of these spaces to surrounding neighborhoods. Proposals include ~~an extended~~ Spruce Tree and Shields/Fuller Avenues, which should run east-west through the site, and the extension of Park Drive and Simpson ~~Albert~~ Street south to Shields/Fuller. ~~The alley south of Midway Shopping Center is proposed as a private street called Midway Drive.~~

Replace “Albert Triangle Park” (because it is within the Hamline Station Area) with “United Champion Plaza.”

Update Figure 3.2 info for “United Champion Plaza.”

Update Figure 3.2 caption as follows:

FIGURE 3.2 ~~Albert Triangle Park can be programmed to accommodate special events, or be a place of relaxation for employees.~~ **United Champion Plaza** is a smaller open space at the southwest corner of the Allianz Field stadium site and adjacent to the Snelling bridge over I-94.

Update Figure 3.2 text as follows:

~~This irregularly shaped wedge, could be created by the future extension of Fuller Avenue and Albert Street around a retail plaza, along this preferred east-west bicycle route. This green space may also provide a central gathering space for area employees, shoppers, or residents; or as an active programmed area with year-round special events such as outdoor farmer’s markets, arts and crafts displays, live music, winter ice skating, and others.~~ Champions Plaza’s location makes it a gateway from the south to the stadium and larger Snelling-Midway area. It will be a popular gathering place for neighbors entering the area and fans cheering on their team. A mix of landscape and hardscape suitable for gathering will define the physical space.

Change “Snelling Commons” to “Victory Plaza and Midway Square” and update Figure 3.3 image to reflect new park configuration.

Update Figure 3.3 caption as follows:

FIGURE 3.3 - The large public open spaces Midway Square and Victory Plaza between University Avenue and Allianz Field stadium are planned for activities that range from passive recreation to festivals, farmers markets, and food trucks. Snelling Commons demonstrates one way to create a focal point for the redevelopment of the strategic bus barn site.

Update paragraph below Figure 3.3 as follows:

~~Depending on the nature of private development proposed and public resources available, an additional green space could be located in the former Bus Barn site. Public investment in green space and pedestrian amenities in this key Station Area should be designed to contribute to the value and market place competitiveness of this strategic parcel. A green open space might support development of a significant new employment center, research park, institutional campus, urban format retail center, hotel, or entertainment uses on this site. These spaces are also the primary areas identified to store runoff from the stadium and future development on the remainder of the 34.4-acre site. The master plan envisions application of green infrastructure practices, irrigation cisterns, grey water recycling stations, and water features incorporating stormwater management systems.~~

P. 20 Change “Snelling Transit Plaza” to “The Boulevard.”

Update Figure 3.4 caption, as follows:

FIGURE 3.4 ~~The proposed Snelling Transit Plaza will be a new civic gathering place contiguous to the LRT platform, where public transit riders can rest and take shelter. The Boulevard will transform Snelling Avenue with wider sidewalks, street trees and active ground floor uses such as shops, cafés, and office building lobbies at street level.~~

Update Snelling Transit Plaza text to:

~~Snelling Avenue~~ The proposed Snelling Transit Plaza, on the Avenue adjacent to the LRT platform, may incorporate both hard and landscaped surfaces, and will play a vital role in softening the barren quality defining the Snelling and University intersection today. It will provide more pedestrian space and a buffer area along the street and furniture zone to make it more comfortable to walk along. This plaza will provide a green anchor at the opposite end of a pedestrian route connecting LRT riders through the interior of the Midway Shopping District site to Snelling Commons; and provide The Boulevard will be an attractive setting and place of respite on an otherwise busy corridor that affords shelter and waiting space for transit riders.

P. 21 Update Figure 3.6 with image from master plan.

Update Figure 3.6 caption as follows:

~~The Snelling Transit Plaza offers opportunity for a linear art gallery with changing exhibitions of two and three dimensional work that could continue for many blocks, linking the station with Snelling Commons to the south and the Minnesota State Fair to the north. This precedent example for Champions Plaza illustrates how landscape design can use public art and stormwater to create a unique and inviting public space.~~

Update last public art paragraph as follows:

Existing and new spaces, such as parking lots, plazas, parks and temporary street closings that allow artists and audiences to interact in a participatory, temporary and somewhat unstructured manner should be created within the Snelling-Midway development. Public art events could include temporary festivals, street painting events, concerts, pageants and flea

markets. The creation of signature public art works at gateway sites and other major destinations should be promoted to create visible landmarks that draw attention from near and far. Pedestrian-friendly wayfinding should be created as an integral component of the public art plan to encourage audiences to move from one area to another within the neighborhood. Public art should be a tool for tapping into the neighborhood's unique history. Historical references can be manifested in a multitude of ways, from well-designed and informative signs or plaques to sculpted figures reenacting an historic scene to motion-activated speakers that offer a poetic narration. While public art opportunities are broadly available to national and even international artists, special efforts should be made to engage local artists. ~~Artists engaged in shaping the form and experience of the key station areas should consider the following concepts and opportunities identified through the workshop process:~~

- ~~• Snelling LRT Platform, Transit Plaza, and Gateway Green Space present significant opportunities to celebrate through art, the many characteristics of Snelling: as an avenue of commerce, of residential neighborhoods and of Education (from pre-school to high school, to Macalester College and Hamline University). It is the road to the Minnesota State Fair and the station could begin a celebratory promenade to that major state attraction. The work begun through paint the pavement and artful street amenities may connect to the Platform and Plaza.~~
- ~~• Albert Street Triangle presents opportunity to engage artists in creating amenities, art exhibitions, and art events;~~
- ~~• Snelling Commons presents an opportunity to engage artists in partnership with designers and scientists to collaborate in developing the Commons landscape and to apply new art technologies and sustainable materials to create amenities, new permanent artworks, and temporary installations.~~

P. 25 Update Figure 4.1 to account for Hamline Station Area and add "Priority Active Frontage" along the length of Snelling Avenue.

P. 26 Update Figure 4.2 to reflect master plan.

P. 27 Edit policy 4.1.2.e), as follows:

The Bus Barn site and adjacent parcels will ~~has the potential to support~~ support a range of uses including a professional soccer stadium, retail, office commercial, institutional, a hotel or conference center, residential development and entertainment uses.

P. 39 Update Figure 5.1 to reflect master plan and Hamline Station Area Plan.

P. 40 Update text in first paragraph in second column:

- Preserving land for a mid-block ~~connection~~ park extending south from University Avenue to connect ~~the proposed Snelling Transit Plaza~~ with new development at the Bus Barn site.

Update second to last paragraph under “The Designated Crossings”

Along Snelling Avenue there are two *East -West Bike Pedestrian Crossings* at Shields Spruce Tree Avenue and Charles Avenue and a pedestrian crossing at Spruce Tree Avenue. These are important crossings that will extend the corridor wide east -west bicycle routes east to the Capitol Area and west to Fairview Avenue. Though a jog is required around the Health East facility, the crossing at Shields Spruce Tree Avenue links a proposed bike trail that connects even further west into Minneapolis along St. Anthony Avenue and a former rail corridor.

P. 41 Update Figure 5.2 to reflect master plan and Hamline Station Area Plan.

P. 44 Update section “The Bus Barn Site Should Come Forward as a TOD Demonstration Site” as follows:

The Bus Barn/Allianz Field Stadium Site Should Come Forward as a TOD Catalyst Demonstration Site

The City should work with Metropolitan Council, Minnesota United FC, and RK Midway to explore the full potential of this strategic site and implement the ~~create a clear development strategy~~ master plan for its future redevelopment. The master plan ~~development strategy~~ should reinforce the long-term vision as set out in this document. All future development applications within this site should demonstrate compatibility with the plan strategy. The future viability and success of this site coming forward as a TOD catalyst ~~Demonstration Site~~ may in part be assisted through some combination of Tax Increment Financing, the STAR Program, and/ or a Regional Transit-Oriented Development “Bank”, as described in Chapter 9 Moving Forward.

P. 45 Delete University United, Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, and the Central Corridor Design Center because they are organizations that no longer exist (This edit is unrelated to the Snelling-Midway Master Plan).

WESTGATE STATION AREA PLAN UPDATES

Westgate Public Realm Plan

The Westgate Public Realm Plan was a collaborative effort to refine the Westgate Station Area Plan. The goals of this effort were to maximize open space, knit together rapidly changing land uses, and connect the site to the surrounding neighborhoods. The City of Saint Paul engaged the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation and Urban Design Associates to develop a public realm plan with input from key stakeholders, including developers working in the station area; community members from St. Anthony Park Community Council and Prospect Park Neighborhood Association; civic groups and key City departments. Key to the process was a design workshop, that included community input meetings and Individual meetings with property owners and developers. The feedback received during these meetings was incorporated into the final public realm recommendations. The overall public realm plan is illustrated below.



Figure 2: Westgate Public Realm Plan

Westgate Station Area Plan Updates

P. 18 Update Figure 3.1 to reflect Westgate Public Realm Plan.

P. 19 Update Figure 3.2 to include new park location. Also update heading and text.

Update Figure 3.2 heading:

Establish a New ~~Curfew~~ Commons Park

Update Figure 3.2 text as follows:

Two proposed green spaces are needed to anchor the emerging residential and employment villages structured around University Avenue. The southern of these two, ~~Curfew~~ Commons Park, should be designed to combine active green space and gathering places for the area's growing residential community, and passive open spaces that provide visual relief for employees from adjacent commercial buildings. The Commons will further act as both a terminus and entry point for the Wabash bike and pedestrian connection over Interstate 94 and to destinations further east.

P.22 Add new Figure 3.9, "Trail Connection to Grand Round."

Add caption text as follows:

FIGURE 3.9 - The proposed trail connection on Wabash Avenue Bridge will connect to Pelham Boulevard. The Wabash Avenue trail safely links to the Westgate LRT Station and to the Grand Round trail system.

Add description text as follows:

The trail is located on a former rail line that was both private property and public right-of-way. The trail provides a key connection to the development along Wabash, which currently has inadequate pedestrian access due to limited right-of-way. The Wabash rail bridge presents an opportunity to connect to the bicycle and trail network to the east. The bridge is currently owned and maintained by MnDOT. In the short term, this bridge would be ideal for a separated bike facility. If the bridge cannot be used in that way, the road is wide enough for marked shared lanes (but not wide enough for dedicated striped lanes). Long-term, and/or with a future bridge replacement, a separated two-way trail facility should be built along the southern side of the Wabash bridge, as well as improved pedestrian accommodations on both sides.

P. 27 Update Figure 4.1 to show new park location and connection to Grand Round.

P.31 Edit policy 4.1.2.b), as follows:

Building heights could increase adjacent to the new ~~Curfew Commons Park space at the foot of Curfew and Berry Streets~~, but should transition down to 4 stories along Emerald and Curfew Streets to preserve the existing scale and character of the street.

P. 41 Update Figure 5.1 to show new park and street configuration.

Update “Improved Freeway Crossings” paragraph to include correct frontage streets, as follows:

As freeway crossings (with traffic bridges) are redesigned and reconstructed, include widened sidewalks, crash barriers between traffic & sidewalk, pedestrian-level lighting, and approach sidewalk lighting & landscaping. Pedestrian-only freeway crossings should be rebuilt or retrofitted to include well-lit crossings of ~~Eustis St. Anthony and Cromwell Concordia~~, bridge lighting, and careful landscaping that does not obscure views to and from the bridge.

P. 42 Update second paragraph of “Mobility Enhancement Area” as follows:

South of University Avenue, strategies should focus on supporting the emerging residential Urban Village by rebalancing streets to reflect the new residential character of the area and connecting to the new Commons Park. Along Franklin Avenue an opportunity exists to strengthen cycle connections east towards St. Paul and provide an improved pedestrian connection to the Raymond Village area.

P. 43 Update Figure 5.2 to reflect new park and street locations.

P. 47 Delete University United, Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, and the Central Corridor Design Center because they are organizations that no longer exist (This edit is unrelated to the Westgate Public Realm Plan).

NEXT STEPS

Hold public hearing at Planning Commission on July 27th, 2018. Send testimony to Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee for consideration.