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CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Drive Thru Zoning Study

City Council Policy Committee
January 21, 2026



Today's Presentation

- **Schedule**
- **Scale of drive throughs in St. Paul**
- **Problems with drive throughs**
- **Impact of the Traditional Neighborhood Districts Zoning Study**
- **Policy questions for the City Council**

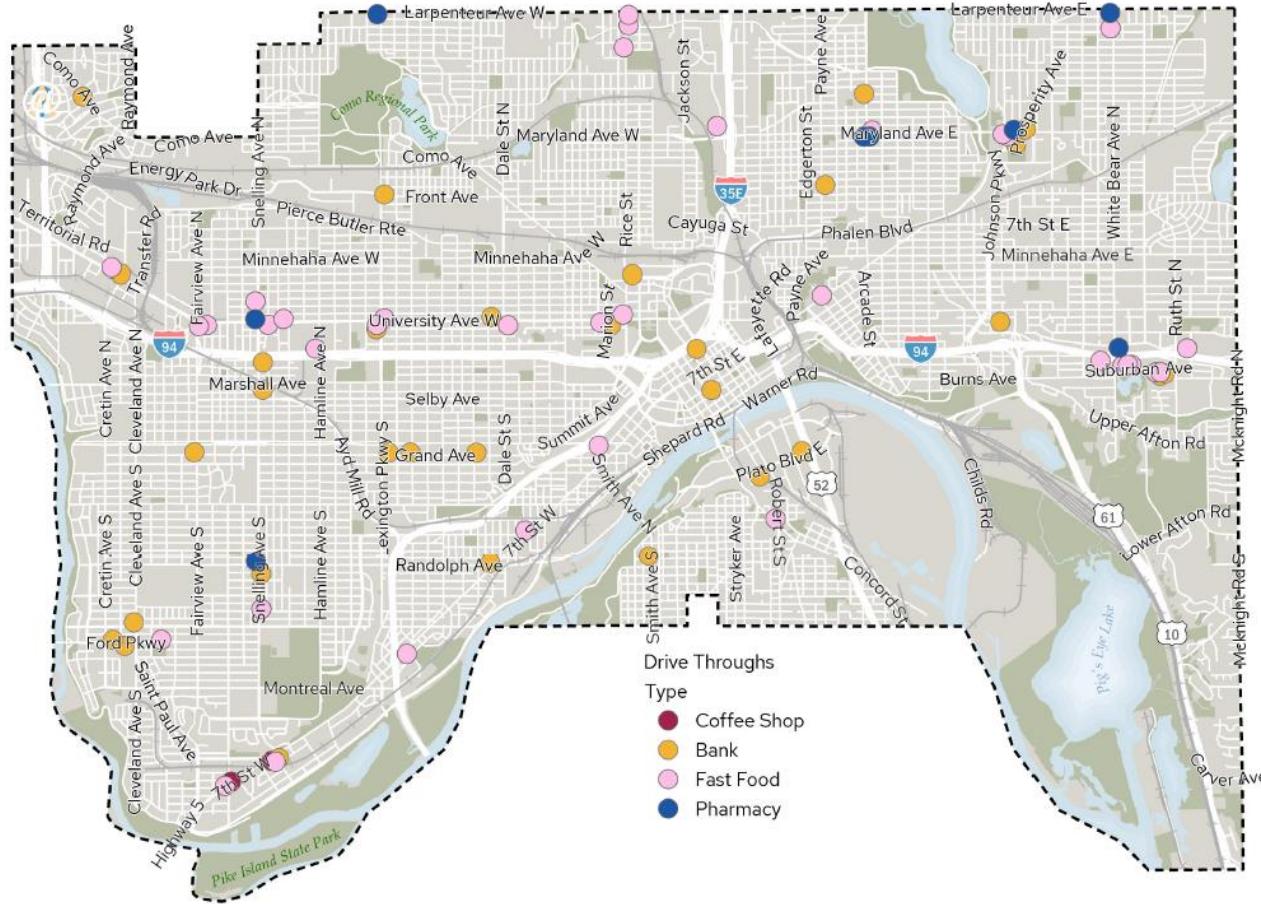


Schedule

- June 2024: Public hearing held at Planning Commission
- November 2024: Public hearing was held at City Council, laid over
- September 2025: Public hearing laid over again
- February 18, 2026: Public hearing on City Council agenda

Drive Throughs in Saint Paul

Tuesday, January 30, 2024





Problems with drive throughs

- Potentially conflicting with our Comprehensive Plan policies
 - LU-9: Promote high-quality urban design that supports pedestrian friendliness and a healthy environment, and enhances the public realm.
 - LU-10: Activate streetscapes with active first-floor uses, street trees, public art, outdoor commercial uses and other uses that contribute to a vibrant street life.
 - T-22: Shift mode share towards walking, biking, public transit, carpooling, ridesharing and carsharing in order to reduce the need for car ownership.



Problems with drive throughs

- Off-site queuing
 - Traffic studies have shown a need for 5 to 26 vehicle stacking spaces
 - Highest numbers are for coffee and fast-food

2020 aerial photo of the Starbucks at Snelling and Marshall, with 14 vehicles in the queue. Zoned T2.





Problems with drive throughs

- Unsafe pedestrian access
- Non-pedestrian-oriented streetscape
- Noise
- Litter
- Behavior
- Health
- Pollution
 - Greater impact is indirect





What did the T Districts Study change?

- Fixed safe pedestrian access.
 - For most buildings in all zoning districts, direct pedestrian access is now required to buildings without crossing drive aisles.
- Will need a Version 2 that deletes the standard from drive throughs, since it already applies more broadly



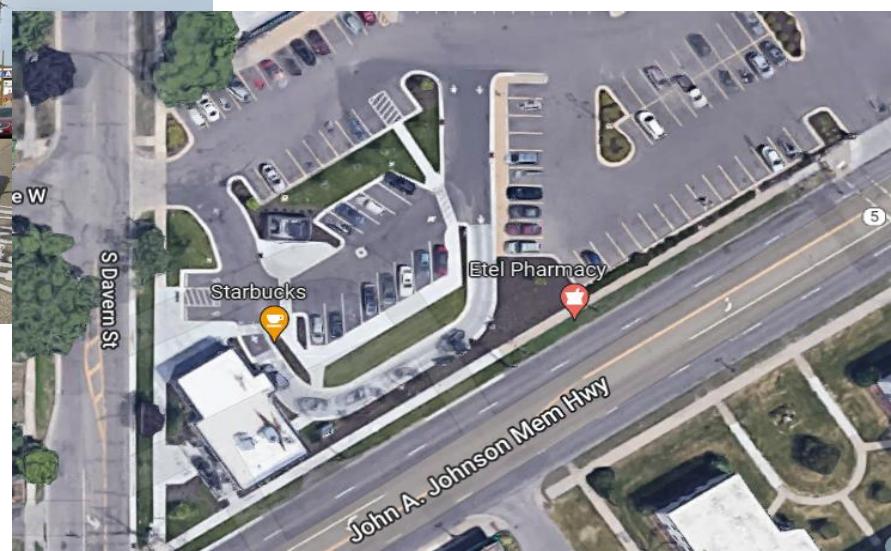
City Council's main policy questions

1. Should drive throughs be prohibited for restaurants and coffee shops?
2. Should indoor/walk-up service be required during all hours that a drive through is open?
3. Which zoning districts should allow drive throughs?
4. If drive throughs are expanded to T3 and T4, is it desirable to require them to be in buildings with 4+ stories?



No restaurant or coffee drive throughs

(a) The use is not permitted to be associated with a food and beverage use.





Require indoor/walkup service

(j) Products and services provided via a drive-through window must during the same hours also be provided to customers not in motor vehicles via the building interior, a walk-up kiosk, or a walk-up service window. Serving such customers via the drive-through window does not satisfy this standard.





Existing → Recommended zoning districts

| | T1 | T2 | T3 | T4 | OS | B1 | BC | B2 | B3 | B4 | B5 | IT | I1 | I2 | I3 |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Drive-through sales and service, primary and accessory | | C | | | C | C | | C | P | P | P | P | P | P | |



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|--|----|----|----------|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Drive-through sales and service, primary and accessory | | C | <u>C</u> | <u>C</u> | € | € | | C | P | P | P | P | P | P | |



Minimum height in T3, T4

(h) In T3 traditional neighborhood and T4 traditional neighborhood districts the drive-through service windows must be part of a building with at least four stories in height and 40,000 square feet in gross floor area.





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Drive Throughs Zoning Study

Ordinance materials:

<https://stpaul.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7003872&GUID=DDC5D153-52DF-4D6F-A7DB-E69C14C26F1B>

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