



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

*25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

*Telephone: 651-266-6700
Facsimile: 651-228-3220*

DATE: January 9, 2019
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee
RE: Amendments to the Gold Line Station Area Plans

BACKGROUND

The Gold Line Station Area Plans (GLSAP) were adopted by the Mayor and City Council as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan in October 2015 after an 18-month public process involving a steering committee co-chaired by Planning Commissioner Trevor Oliver, two public hearings, and a Planning Commission recommendation. The associated zoning study was adopted at that time, and many GLSAP elements have been implemented over the past three years as planning for the Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor has progressed. The surprisingly quick development of a new apartment building at 1880 Old Hudson Road, immediately adjacent to the planned White Bear BRT station, has recently prompted re-evaluation of the GLSAP's White Bear Station Area chapter, specifically regarding the preferred station location. The station is named the "White Bear Station" at this time even though it will be located somewhat to the east, and may get renamed closer to BRT service commencement (planned for 2024).

In 2015, with a vacant lot at 1880 Old Hudson Road and concerns about station safety being a prominent factor, the GLSAP called for locating the station "approximately 170 feet east of Van Dyke Street," which was relatively close to "eyes on the street" in the form of two buildings on the north side of Old Hudson Road with windows facing the station. With the new development set to open in late 2018, there is reason to believe that a station location farther east approximately aligned with Hazel Street (on the other side of the new apartments), might be more advantageous. Certainly, the distance from "eyes on the street" is far less of a concern with the new apartments in place than it would have been without them.

Metro Transit's Gold Line Project Office (GPO) has led substantial public outreach in 2018 on the question of preferred White Bear BRT Station location, including via general project open houses and electronic communication, pop-ups at two events elsewhere in Saint Paul, and via geographically targeted door-knocking and a smaller community meeting near the site. Overall, those expressing an opinion preferred the Hazel Street location over the near-Van Dyke Street location by a margin of 34 to 20. When looking just at the door-knocking and local meeting, the preference for the Hazel Street location was stronger: 25 to 7. Those preferring Hazel Street commented that it is closer to more apartments, the station location has more space around it, and

Hazel Street is a more natural pedestrian access through the neighborhood. Those preferring Van Dyke noted that Ruth Street (closer to Hazel) already has transit. Commenters for both brought up safety, including a perilous intersection at Hazel Street and Old Hudson Road that is downhill from a blind turn for westbound traffic.

Since the public preference seemed to support a policy change, staff asked the District 1 Community Council to address the issue. On October 1, the District 1 Land Use Committee voted to support amending the GLSAP to: (1) change the preferred White Bear BRT Station location to be approximately aligned with Hazel Street; and (2) advocate for a 3-way stop at the intersection of Old Hudson Road and Hazel Street to improve pedestrian safety. They noted that more people nearby prefer the Hazel Street location, that it is closer to more apartments, that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) owns the adjacent land to the north/northeast and so there is more potential for a plaza or other public use, and that there are fewer parked cars nearby that could interfere with pedestrian safety.

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

No written or oral testimony was received in conjunction with the public hearing held December 14, 2018 at Planning Commission. As noted above, the District 1 Land Use Committee previously voted to support amending the GLSAP in the manner proposed.

COMPREHENSIVE & NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The CNPC recommends that the Planning Commission approve the attached Draft Resolution recommending the Gold Line Station Area Plans amendments to the Mayor & City Council for approval.

Attachments

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution
2. Existing GLSAP excerpt: White Bear Station chapter (full GLSAP available for context at www.stpaul.gov/GoldLineSAP)
3. Aerial photographs
4. Site photos (taken October 1, 2018)