



West 7th/Fort Road Federation

974 West 7th Street

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

651-298-5599

FortRoadFederation.org

January 16, 2013

Lucy Thompson
Principal City Planner
Department of Planning & Economic Development
City of Saint Paul
25 West 4th Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Re: Amendment to District 9 Area Plan and Summary

Dear Lucy;

On behalf of the Fort Road Federation Board attached please find recommendations from a small working group that was formed to explore options to articulate and preserve the historic character of the West 7th neighborhood for future construction and development plans. These recommendations have been adopted by the Fort Road Federation Board and we request that they be adopted by the City of Saint Paul.

Background: Over the past two years there have been a variety of instances where property owners felt that they were forced to protest or resist plans that had received the initial approval of the city planning staff. This demonstrated a need for more specific design guidelines than were provided in the District 9 Area Plan. The Fort Road Federation felt that specific guidelines would be instructive for the city staff to use when conducting site plan review as well as other planning and permit processes. In addition, design guidelines would be useful for other projects in the West 7th neighborhood.

Beginning in January 2012 and as part of the Commercial Zoning Study for the Mobil station/Burger King lots, Lucy Thompson from the City of Saint Paul led a community input process that included residents and business owners from the Irvine Park, Uppertown, Dousman Park and Little Bohemia neighborhoods. Over the course of three meetings, participants expressed a hope that new zoning would support an urban and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood and discourage past practices like large surface parking lots along West 7th street or suburban-style development that does not fit well with the historic character of the neighborhood.

In addition to the zoning discussions a small working group was formed including Betty Moran, Lucy Thompson, Marit Brock, Paulette Myers-Rich and Becky Yust. The group reviewed available options for creating and enforcing design guidelines, including:

- a) Creating an Overlay District for an additional layer of specifics beyond the zoning code.
- b) Requesting changes to the zoning codes to accommodate the interests of the neighborhood.
- c) Updating the District 9 Area Plan to provide guidance regarding design specifics.
- d) Doing nothing. Allow the current zoning to guide future development.

Recommendation: The working group learned that the current TN zoning will effectively address design items such as parking, building height, orientation of buildings to the street and pedestrian access that were the primary concerns of the neighborhood participants. In addition, the Fort Road Federation has developed extensive resources that can be used to provide design guidance, but those resources were not widely known or available. Based on this information, we agreed that the best option to assure a clearly articulated design plan is to update the District 9 Area Plan. The following changes are recommended, with the specifics highlighted on the attached documents:

- Update the section titled Historic Preservation and Aesthetics on Page 18 of the plan. Add specifics in the Urban Design Guidelines section on Page 19.
- Create Appendix A – Visual Examples of Appropriate Design. The content of this section is based on the 1979 Fort Road Design Guidelines.
- Add item 53 on the Area Plan Summary specifically referencing Appendix A.

These changes will provide updated design standards in an easily accessible format to provide direction for city staff during the site plan review, planning and permit process. One shortcoming of this recommendation is that it will not create enforceable design requirements for future development. However, with the support of the new zoning regulations and considering the time required to develop and gain approval for an overlay district or other zoning changes we feel that an update to the District 9 Area Plan is sufficient at this time.

Timeline:

January-March 2012: Community input meetings with residents and business owners in the Little Bohemia, Uppertown, Dousman Park and Irvine Park neighborhoods.

April – July 2012: Working group meetings to develop a recommendation based on community input.

August 2012: Review and feedback from Fort Road Federation board.

September 2012: Adoption by the Fort Road Federation board. Changes submitted to the Planning Commission for approval.

Please contact the Fort Road Federation at (651)298-5599 with any remaining questions.

Respectfully submitted,



Marit Brock

Fort Road Federation Board member