

Area Plan Summary

The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

Recommended by the Planning Commission July 23, 1999

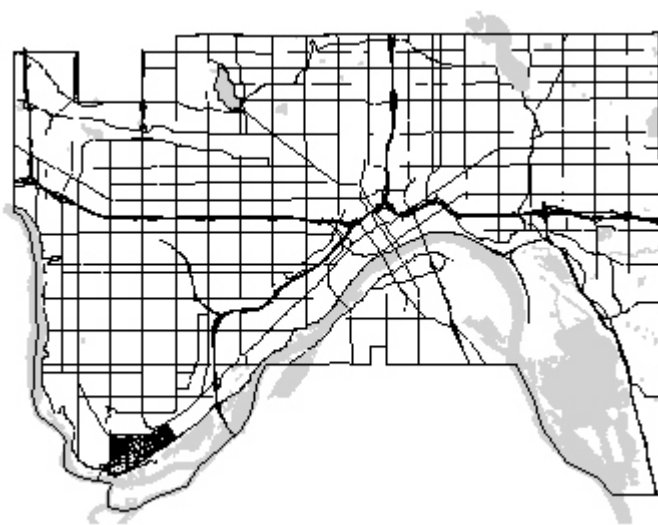
Adopted by the City Council September 22, 1999

This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision of The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan for redevelopment of the historic Shepard-Davern area. This includes adoption of a proposed land use map as a further refinement of the City's Land Use Plan for the area. The Plan identifies means for implementation in this area of a number of Comprehensive Plan policies, including:

- *Increased housing and transit-supportive development*
- *A re-designed entry to the city at the river*
- *Integrated neighborhood development and improved connections*
- *High quality built environment*
- *Partnership action: City, neighborhood, private and non-profit sectors*

Location

The Shepard Davern area is bounded by the Mississippi River on the south and west, and the Highland Park bluffs on the north.



Vision

A new gateway entrance to the city and neighborhood will be established consistent with the historic character of the area. New development along Davern and Shepard Road will mix commercial and residential uses along park-like streets, and include hotel and conference facilities. Residential areas will be redeveloped to create urban villages, green streets and commons, with up to 1,000 new units of housing. Shepard Road is envisioned as a river road parkway, offering scenic views and access to a restored natural environment. The business district on West Seventh Street will be a vital community business center serving a variety of local needs in an environment more attractive and comfortable for pedestrians.

Specific Area Plans & Design Guidelines

1. Gateway Area

This area will be identified as a key entry into the City of St. Paul, beginning on Hwy. 5 west of the Mississippi River Bridge (where the freeway divides), and extending to the I-35 Interchange. To change the character of the road from a freeway to a “gateway” into the city, new historic lighting, ironwork railings, landscaping, a major city entry sign, public art, and pedestrian amenities are planned. The Saint Paul Gateway Project is an ongoing project of the Highland District Council, initiated before the Small Area Plan was undertaken.

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2. Shepard Road River Bluff District

Shepard Road will be realigned, and redesigned as a parkway with wide curves and bends, extending the character of the Mississippi River Road. The design would include new pedestrian amenities, such as crosswalks, lighting and seating at overlooks, as well as rebuilding the walking and biking trails, and the addition of new stairs or trails to connect the Highland bluffs to the lowland park. The old bridge abutment has been identified as a historic site and scenic river overlook, planned with new interpretive panels, paving, and lighting. Native vegetation and wildflowers will be planted, restoring the natural landscape of the Mississippi River bluffs. Extensive landscaping is required to change the Shepard Road environment to one that reflects the green character of the river corridor.

3. West Seventh / Fort Road Commercial District

The Fort Road shopping district begins east of Wheeler, and continues to St. Paul Avenue. Retail and mixed-use buildings with active ground floor uses are encouraged. Building entries and shop windows will be oriented to West Seventh / Fort Road, and buildings should reflect the historic character of the road. Parking will be located at the sides or back of buildings, and screened and landscaped. Shared, structured parking is encouraged. Additions and improvements to the Sibley Plaza Shopping Center will occur, increasing and reinforcing the

existing retail and creating new spaces for informal community gathering, such as plazas and shopping mews.

Eventual mixed-use development on the southeast side of West Seventh will help strengthen the district as a community shopping area.

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4. New Housing

Up to 1,000 new units of housing will be built, primarily within the existing neighborhoods east of West Maynard Drive. New housing types will include apartment buildings, rowhouses, and condominiums, of a diversity and quality consistent with the pattern established by newer housing in the area. Substantial, high-quality multi-family development would face Shepard Road. A new park/playground is included in the area to serve the larger population.

The area's current economic mix is an asset that should be maintained as new housing is constructed. New housing built in the area should provide for a range of economic levels as required by the City's housing policy. The high component of units affordable for households with incomes below 30 percent of the median already present (at least 25 percent of area housing) should be taken into account; it would be appropriate to emphasize the affordable needs above this level. This assumes effective continued maintenance of the present affordable units at present cost levels; units lost should be replaced with units at similar cost. Besides meeting affordability objectives, new housing should respond to the market interest in townhouse and condominium alternatives and build on the success of the newer housing options already available in the area.

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5. Edgcumbe Parkway District

A new mixed-use business park is proposed for the entire area west of Sibley Manor from Shepard Road to West Seventh Street. Office-commercial, retail, hospitality and residential uses are to be included, replacing airport-related parking as well as the single family neighborhood west of Davern Street. New buildings would be encouraged to locate retail or small commercial tenants on the ground floor, with active shop windows and streetfront entrances. Davern would be strengthened as a pedestrian connection to the Fort Road shopping area, with curbs, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping.

Extension of Edgcumbe Parkway across West Seventh Street is proposed to improve access to the new business park and provide a central interior focus for the area, connecting with Shepard Road on the east. An at-grade intersection with West Seventh Street is proposed to help establish a slower city-street character for West Seventh Street. However, the plan specifies that a grade-separated alternative should be evaluated as well and the at-grade solution should only be implemented if it is clear that traffic impacts are satisfactory. Edgcumbe Parkway will be richly

landscaped and well defined by the built streetwall. Buildings will be set close to the street and designed in brick and stone.

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Implementation

- Gateway fund-raising to enable the community to begin public realm investments, such as signage, historic lantern lighting, landscaping, bridge improvement, and the Gateway Garden. (Saint Paul CIB, STAR Grant, ISTEPA, and state funds have already been secured by the Saint Paul Gateway Project.)
- Improvements to West Seventh Commercial District, including design, funding and installation of landscaping and lighting along West Seventh; reconstructing sidewalks and cross-walk improvements; encouraging private property improvements.
- Rezoning the Edgcombe Parkway area and Davern Street industrially zoned land to B2; rezoning housing sites east of Sibley Manor according to plan vision.
- Create a zoning overlay for critical areas of the plan, which would require all new building projects to comply with the Small Area Plan.
- Market opportunity: ensure awareness of plan objectives.
- Develop more complete and definitive design guidelines for continuing development and strengthen means for enforcement.
- Study options for replacing displaced housing, such as relocating into new units, etc.
- Evaluate the feasibility of tax increment financing (TIF) districts to support local public space improvements (streets, parks, art, daycare, etc.), district parking, housing rehab and/or affordable housing within the area plan.
- Design and construct the parkway extension, new street connections, and improvements to Davern Street.
- Coordination of Saint Paul City departments (PED, Public Works, and Parks & Recreation), MnDOT, and Ramsey County.
- Obtain funding to develop the scenic overlook and design its elements - interpretive panels, seating, lighting, and landscaping.
- Collaborate with other organizations to implement this plan. (Greening the Great River Park and Public Art St. Paul are already contributing to ongoing efforts.)

City Action

Actions needed for encouragement of development according to the vision include:

- Complete design and installation of Gateway improvements funded, and support continuation and completion of the Gateway Project.
- Adopt this summary, including its land use map, as an amendment to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan.
- Complete the design, review, and adoption of zoning measures required for implementation.
- Guide development to realize the plan's objectives through site plan review and zoning procedures including zoning amendments.
- Support continued refinement of design guidelines for continuing development in the area

- and strengthen the means for effective enforcement.
- Support privately-initiated redevelopment where proposals are consistent with the plan, consistent with design guidelines and objectives for a high quality environment, provide acceptable and desirable outcomes for residents displaced, and consistent with city policies and prudent use of public resources.
 - Design and construct improvements for the West Seventh streetscape and pedestrian areas, realignment of Edgcombe Parkway, and upgrades to Davern Street.
 - Long range: initiate design and planning work for major reconstruction of Shepard Road according to plan.

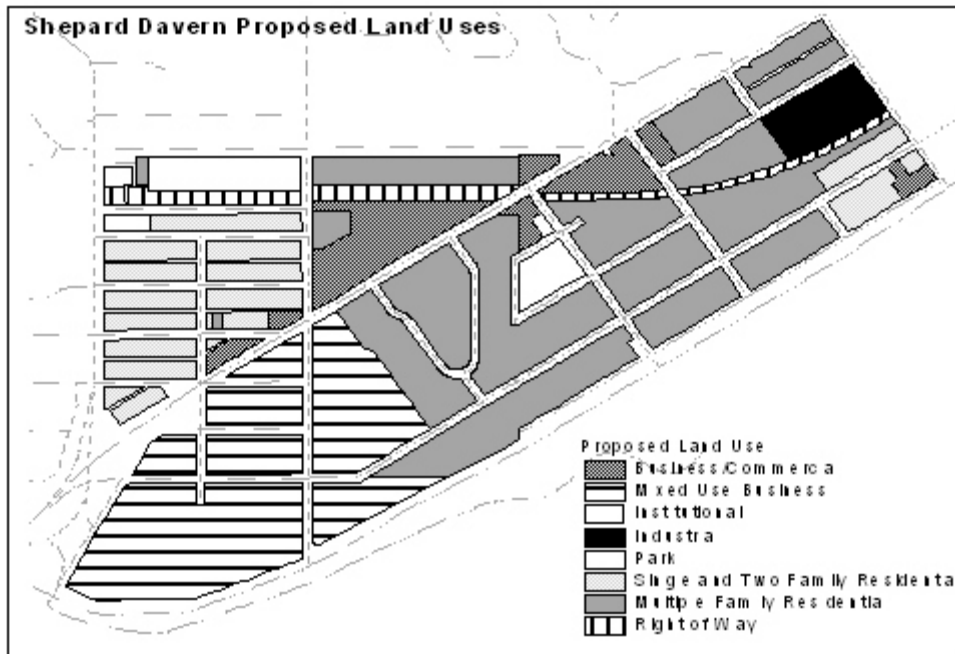
Planning Commission Findings

In general, the Planning Commission finds *The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan* to be highly consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and associated city development policies.

Implementation of development envisioned on Shepard Road sites--hotel and office as well as housing--may be difficult because of the 40-foot height limit established by the river corridor ordinance. The 40-foot height limit may prevent development that can meet the quality standards desired, including parking enclosed within the structure and extensive landscaped open space. In the development of zoning regulations to implement the plan, consideration should be given to allowance of limited additional height as a special condition use with strong conditions and provisions for review that would ensure development that contributes positively to environmental quality for the corridor and to the plan vision. Height regulation is one aspect of river corridor development that will be reviewed in the update of the Saint Paul River Corridor Plan.

Planning Process

The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan was prepared by a task force established by the Highland District Council (District 15). Membership included members of the Highland District Council, area residents and business owners, the Saint Paul Parks Commission, the Community Service Agency, and the West End Business and Professional Association. The small area task force was assisted throughout the planning process by staff from City of Saint Paul, Highland District Council, and urban design and economic analysis professionals from A Studio, Close Landscape Architecture, and Quam Sumnicht & Associates. The small area planning effort was paralleled by the work of the Gateway Task Force, which is working on the planning, design, funding and implementation of specific improvements for the Gateway area and the West Seventh Street Corridor from the airport to I-35. The small area plan was recommended by the task force on April 19, 1999.



Copies of *The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan* can be obtained by calling Jim Zdon at 651-266-6559.