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**Date:** March 13, 2015

**To:** The Saint Paul City Council

**From:** The Saint Paul Planning Commission

**RE:** The District 11 Hamline Midway Mixed-Use Corridors 40-Acre Zoning Study

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**Background**

The Hamline Midway Zoning Study was initiated by Saint Paul Planning Commission Resolution 13-58 in December of 2013, and the study's findings and recommendations were released for public review on December 5, 2014. Per the authorizing resolution, the zoning study looked at blocks with frontage on Snelling and Hamline Avenues between University Avenue and Pierce Butler Route, and at blocks with frontage on Thomas and Minnehaha Avenues between Hamline and Snelling. A public hearing was held on February 13, 2015 and the Neighborhood Planning Committee reviewed testimony on March 4, 2015.

**Zoning Study Process**

As noted the, Planning Commission initiated the study in late 2013, based on a request from District 11, the Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC). At the same meeting, the Planning Commission released and set a public hearing date for the Hamline Midway Community Plan. That plan, which was adopted as an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan by the City Council in May 2014, was a summary document, developed by City staff from a longer plan originally written by D11/HMC board and committee members and volunteers. While the adopted plan includes relatively little discussion of the requested zoning study, more extensive discussion of zoning issues was found in the original plan document developed by D11/HMC. The areas requested for rezoning were listed in Appendix A to the *Hamline Midway Community Plan* (excerpted below). The final study area, as described in the authorizing resolution, was identified based on the original D11/HMC document as well as City staff discussions with the D11/HMC staff and the Ward 4 office.

## Appendix A: Current and Proposed Zoning

Area	Existing Zoning	Proposed Zoning
A: Snelling Avenue, between Thomas and Englewood	B2	T2
B: West side of Snelling Avenue at Pierce Butler Route	B3	T2 or T3
C: Hamline Avenue at Minnehaha and Van Buren	B1	T1
D: Intersection of Hamline and Thomas Avenues	B2, RT1	T2
E: Thomas Avenue, between Hamline and Pascal	RT1	R4

In September, letters were sent to owners of properties recommended here for rezoning and notifying them of the potential recommendation. Minimal responses were received.

In evaluating the current zoning and developing recommendations for changes to zoning in the study area, staff considered a number of factors. These included past, current and planned future land use, parcel size and configuration, building types, regulation of college campuses, planned transit improvements, and general market trends, as well as City plans for the area. For purposes of discussion, the study area has been broken into sets of subareas along Snelling and Hamline, as shown on Maps 1 and 2 (attached).

### **Findings: Snelling (Areas 1, 2, and 3)**

#### Current Land Use, Zoning, and Building Types

Snelling Avenue in the study area is currently characterized by a mix of commercial, residential and institutional uses, with one and two-story commercial buildings generally predominate. On most blocks, the parcels facing Snelling are about 120' deep, and are separated from single-family and duplex housing along the cross streets by a north-south oriented alley. The west side of Snelling is characterized by detached low-density residential structures between Edmunds and Pierce Butler Route on the north end of the study area (Area 1) and on the first block and a half going north from Thomas Avenue (Area 2). Everything north of Englewood Avenue on the east side of Snelling is part of the Hamline University Campus. On the west side, the block between Englewood and Hubbard is occupied by Hamline Elementary and the Hancock Recreation Center.

All parcels along Snelling in Area 1 are currently zoned RM2 multifamily, with the exception of the small motel (2 parcels) on the west side of Snelling at Pierce Butler Route, which is zoned B3 general business. Area 2 parcels along Snelling are all presently zoned B2 community business, except for the city park between Lafond and Thomas, which is currently zoned T2.

Minnehaha Avenue between Snelling and Asbury (Area 2, immediately east of Snelling) is lined by single family homes on the north side and the Hamline Library and the now-vacant Knox Presbyterian Church on the south. The library and church parcels are presently zoned R4 one-family residential.

Area 3 also includes the site of the former Samaritan Hospital site, which occupied a block bounded by Thomas Avenue on the north, Simpson Street on the east, Charles Avenue on the south, and Asbury Street on the west. Edmund Avenue is vacated between Asbury and Simpson, forming a superblock. It is presently zoned RM2 Multifamily. Samaritan Hospital itself

occupied the southern portion of the superblock. Later, an accessory medical office building and parking ramp were built on the northern half of the block. At the time it was built, hospitals were allowed in residential districts. In the early 1990s, the former Samaritan Hospital was demolished and townhomes were constructed on the site. The medical office building and parking ramp became legally nonconforming primary uses. The office building continues to be use for that purpose. However, this use only generates demand for approximately 100 off-street parking spaces, while the ramp, built to serve the hospital as well, has 327 spaces. In April of 2014, the Planning Commission approved an establishment of nonconforming use permit for use of the parking ramp for vehicle storage. The portion of Area 3 between Snelling Avenue and the Samaritan Hospital site and Snelling Avenue is primarily a mix of multifamily and single family residential, and is zoned RM2. The parcels on fronting on Snelling in Area 3 were rezoned to T2 as part of the Central Corridor zoning study.

### Comprehensive Plan, District Plan, and Future Land Use

The future land use map in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan identifies Snelling Avenue, including the entirety of all blocks on the east side of Snelling in the area, as a Mixed Use Corridor (Areas 1, 2, and 3). The map identifies the intersection of University and Snelling (Area 3) as a Neighborhood Center. All of the land within Area 3 is also located within the station area planning boundary, as defined by the 2008 Snelling Station Area Plan. The Comprehensive Plan describes Mixed Use Corridors as being primary thoroughfares served by transit. Neighborhood Centers are described as compact mixed use areas located adjacent to major intersections and served by transit. Outside of Downtown, the Comprehensive Plan identifies Mixed Use Corridors and Neighborhood Centers as having the highest residential densities in the City. Strategies 1.12 and 1.21 of the of the Land Use Chapter call for balancing the density and scale of development to accommodate growth and provide housing at densities that support transit in, respectively, Neighborhood Centers and Mixed-use Corridors. Strategies 1.15 and 1.24, respectively, call for a mix of uses in these areas.

Land Use Strategies LU 1.1 and 1.2 of the Hamline Midway Community Plan call for zoning studies to evaluate the appropriateness of rezoning from business to traditional neighborhood designations throughout the district and along Snelling Avenue in particular. Strategy LU 1.3 calls for identifying redevelopment opportunities in the district. Strategies LU 2 and LU 5 call for pedestrian scale development and appropriate transitions between “disparate land uses”, respectively.

### Analysis and Recommendations

Recent and planned transit improvements were a key consideration of this zoning study. The Green Line LRT on University Avenue is now operational. In 2015, the planned opening of the A Line arterial BRT will provide improved service on Snelling and link it to the Blue Line, via Ford Parkway and, in Minneapolis, 46<sup>th</sup> Street. Also, in addition to BRT-related infrastructure, the Snelling Avenue Multi-modal Study (completed by MnDOT in early 2013) identified recommendations on better accommodating bikes and pedestrians within the corridor and improving safety and mobility, although time lines and funding for improvements aren’t clear.

Arterial BRT will not only bring better service to Snelling, but also establish Snelling as a key north-south link and reaffirm Snelling and University as a key node in that system, drawing

growth and investment to the node at University and the entire length of Snelling considered in this study.

Zoning along the Snelling Avenue corridor needs to accommodate growth and intensification of both residential and commercial uses, consistent with its designation as a Mixed-Use Corridor and with the investment that improved transit service should bring over time. The physical form of future development along the corridor should also enhance the multi-modal nature of the corridor through building design and site configuration. T2 Traditional Neighborhood zoning provides for development densities similar to those allowed under the current B2 Community Business, B3 General Business, and RM2 Multifamily Residential designations. It also provides for step downs in allowed height near lower density residential properties to soften transitions from these to more intense types of land uses. T2 Traditional Neighborhood is recommended for all parcels on the west side of Snelling within Areas 1 and 2 and on the east side of Snelling within Area 2, with the exception of Hamline Park between Thomas and Lafond, which is already T2 Traditional Neighborhood.

North of Englewood Avenue on the east side of Snelling are two large parcels owned by Hamline University (Area 1), which are currently zoned RT1 Two-Family Residential. These parcels are part of the Hamline University campus as defined by conditional use permit (CUP) which regulates campus boundaries, uses, building heights, and parking for Hamline University. The conditional use permit allows for use within the campus boundary, such as classroom buildings, dormitories, offices, etc. that would not otherwise be allowed under the base zoning. The campus boundaries may only be expanded with approval of the Planning Commission. The present base zoning and CUP are sufficient to allow continued development of and investment in the Hamline University campus. However, development standards for college and university campuses, codified in Chapter 65 of the zoning code and enacted through the CUP, require setbacks of 50 feet from all property lines, with additional setbacks for building heights above 50 feet. Such large setbacks are not appropriate along Snelling, nor do they reflect how the campus has been built out, including the recently constructed student center just north of Englewood, which required a CUP modification for reduced setback. No change to the present zoning is recommended. However, as an alternative, a change to a T1 base zoning could also be considered. This would remove the need for a CUP for most of the existing campus, and would apply T1 dimensional standards.

In Area 2, the Hamline Library and the former Knox Presbyterian Church are located along the south side of Minnehaha Avenue, just east of Snelling. Reuse of the church building is limited by the present R4 One-Family Residential zoning. A T2 Traditional Neighborhood designation would allow reuse of the building for a variety of commercial and residential uses, and is recommended. It is assumed that the Hamline Library will remain in operation and under the ownership of the City for the foreseeable future, and the inclusion of the library parcel in the rezoning to create a contiguous zoning district is recommended.

In Area 3, the parcels along Snelling, as well as several along Thomas Avenue, were, as noted, previously rezoned to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. Also as previously noted, the Samaritan Hospital site and the remainder of Area 3 between it and Snelling are within the defined station area planning boundary in the Snelling Station Plan, and are within a quarter mile (5 minute walk) of the Snelling Green Line LRT station. Rezoning of this entire area (as shown on Map 1) to T2 Traditional Neighborhood is recommended.

The portion of Area 3 generally west of Asbury (it includes one parcel on the east side of Asbury on the south side of Sherburne) is well within walking distance of the Snelling LRT station and should be considered part of the Neighborhood Center identified on the future land use map of the Comprehensive Plan. T2 Traditional Neighborhood zoning would be compatible with all existing uses, and would provide for flexibility in potential redevelopment as the level of transit service in the area continues to improve and land use in the station area generally intensifies as projected during planning for the Central Corridor. The office building on the former Samaritan Hospital site would become a conforming use under T2 zoning. Including the site in the proposed rezoning would also provide create a contiguous district and provide flexibility in potential future redevelopment of the site.

All recommended rezonings in Areas 1, 2, and 3 are shown on Map 1, attached.

### **Findings: Hamline (Areas 4, 5, 6 and 7)**

#### Current Land Use, Zoning, and Building Types

At the intersections of Hamline with Thomas (Area 6) and Minnehaha Avenues (Area 4), one- and two-story commercial uses (with second floor multi-family residential) occupy three of four corners, and are zoned B2 community business. At Minnehaha, Horton Park is located on the northwest corner and at Thomas a duplex, presently zoned RT1 two-family, occupies the northwest corner. The rest of Hamline within the study area is lined by single-family homes oriented to the cross streets, with two notable exceptions. At Van Buren (Area 4), Dreamland Arts, a small gallery and performance space, occupies a one-story commercial building facing Hamline; the building shares a lot with and is attached to a single family home that faces Van Buren, which is occupied by the owner/proprietor of Dreamland Arts. The parcel is currently zoned B1 local business. The former Saint Columba parish school occupies the entire eastern side of Hamline between Lafond and Blair (Area 5). The school building shares a large parcel (approximately 2/3 of the block bounded by Hamline, Blair, Syndicate and Lafond) with the Church of Saint Columba, which is located to the east along Lafond. The church is still in active use. The parcel shares R4 one-family zoning with the surrounding properties. Area 7, along Thomas Avenue, consists of 46 one-family homes and 12 duplexes on (with one exception) approximately 125' x 40' one-family lots and is presently zoned RT1 two-family.

#### Comprehensive Plan, District Plan, and Future Land Use

The future land use map in the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan identifies Hamline Avenue (Areas 4, 5, and 6) as a Residential Corridor. Thomas Avenue (including portions in Areas 3 and 7) and Minnehaha Avenue (portions in Area 1) are not identified as corridors, and are considered part of the surrounding Established Neighborhoods except where they intersect with Neighborhood Centers and identified corridors. Residential Corridors are described in the Comprehensive Plan as segments of streets that run through Established Neighborhoods and that are characterized predominantly by medium density residential uses. Established Neighborhoods are described in the Comprehensive Plan as being predominantly residential, with a variety of housing types and scattered, neighborhood serving commercial and service uses.

As noted previously, land use strategy LU 1.1 of the Hamline Midway Community Plan call for zoning studies to evaluate the appropriateness of rezoning from business to traditional neighborhood designations throughout the district. Strategy LU 1.3 calls for identifying

redevelopment opportunities in the district. Strategies LU 2 and LU 5 call for pedestrian scale development and appropriate transitions between “disparate land uses”, respectively.

### Analysis and Recommendations

Commercial uses are generally relatively limited along Residential Corridors and in Established Neighborhoods. Where commercial uses do exist, underlying zoning should support the continuance of uses—and establishment of new uses on existing commercial sites—that are generally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and provide locally-consumer goods and services. Zoning should also reflect building scale and form and site design requirements consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Area 4 includes the existing commercial node at Minnehaha and Hamline, as well as the Dreamland Arts site at Hamline and Van Buren. The commercial node at Thomas is currently zoned B2 Community Business. The recommended rezoning to T2 Traditional Neighborhood would generally allow a similar range and intensity of uses, and apply similar dimensional and density standards. However, in the event of redevelopment, T2 zoning would require site and building design more consistent with traditional neighborhood storefront designs. It would also provide property owners with the flexibility in use of properties for which finding viable commercial uses can be difficult. A similar cluster of B2 zoned commercial properties exists in Area 6, at the intersection of Hamline and Thomas. For similar reasons, rezoning to T2 is recommended here as well. However, Area 6 also includes a duplex property, currently zoned RT1 Two-Family Residential. Rezoning to T2 would allow for continued residential use or the potential conversion of the space to a commercial use.

Dreamland Arts and the attached residential structure are currently zoned B1 Local Business. The business is generally regarded as a gallery for zoning purposes. However, it also functions as a very small scale theater. A theater would be allowed under the proposed T2 zoning, as would the attached residence. Although the change in zoning would technically allow a more potentially intense set of uses and more building mass on the site, the small size of the parcel is a practical limitation on the potential for uses of a type and scale that would be incompatible with surrounding uses.

As noted, Area 5 consists of the St. Columba church and former parish school. Under the present R4 One-Family Residential zoning, options for reuse of the vacant building are limited, even under the provisions for reuse of large structures in Chapter 65 of the zoning code. Under the proposed T1 Traditional Neighborhood zoning, the building could be put back into use as a school, converted to multifamily housing, or used for office space for community, non-profit, and service organizations. It should be noted that parking may not be sufficient for a multifamily use.

The concentration of duplexes in Area 7 (12 out of 58 total residential structures) is similar to the concentration in surrounding R4-zoned areas. Changing the zoning of Area 7 to R4 as contemplated by the *Hamline Midway Community Plan* would bar future duplexes under all circumstances. However, with one exception, the residential lots in the area do not meet the minimum lot dimensions required for a duplex in the RT1 two-family zone (50’ wide and 6,000 sq. ft. in area), meaning new duplexes in the area would require more lot area. Any lot area variance on a standard 40’ lot is unlikely given the standards variances must meet, barring an unusual set of circumstances. Put another way, changing the zoning of Area 7 to R4 one-family

would provide very little marginal benefit in terms of preventing duplex conversions, the only potential benefit of the change. At the same time, changing the zoning to R4 would make the existing 12 duplexes nonconforming as to use. It would also constitute downzoning, something generally inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, which seeks to accommodate increased density, particularly in relative proximity (just over ¼ mile) to the Green Line LRT. No change to the zoning in Area 7 is recommended.

All recommended rezonings in Areas 4, 5, and 6 are shown on Map 2, attached.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Adoption by ordinance of the zoning changes recommended herein and shown on the attached Maps 1 and 2.

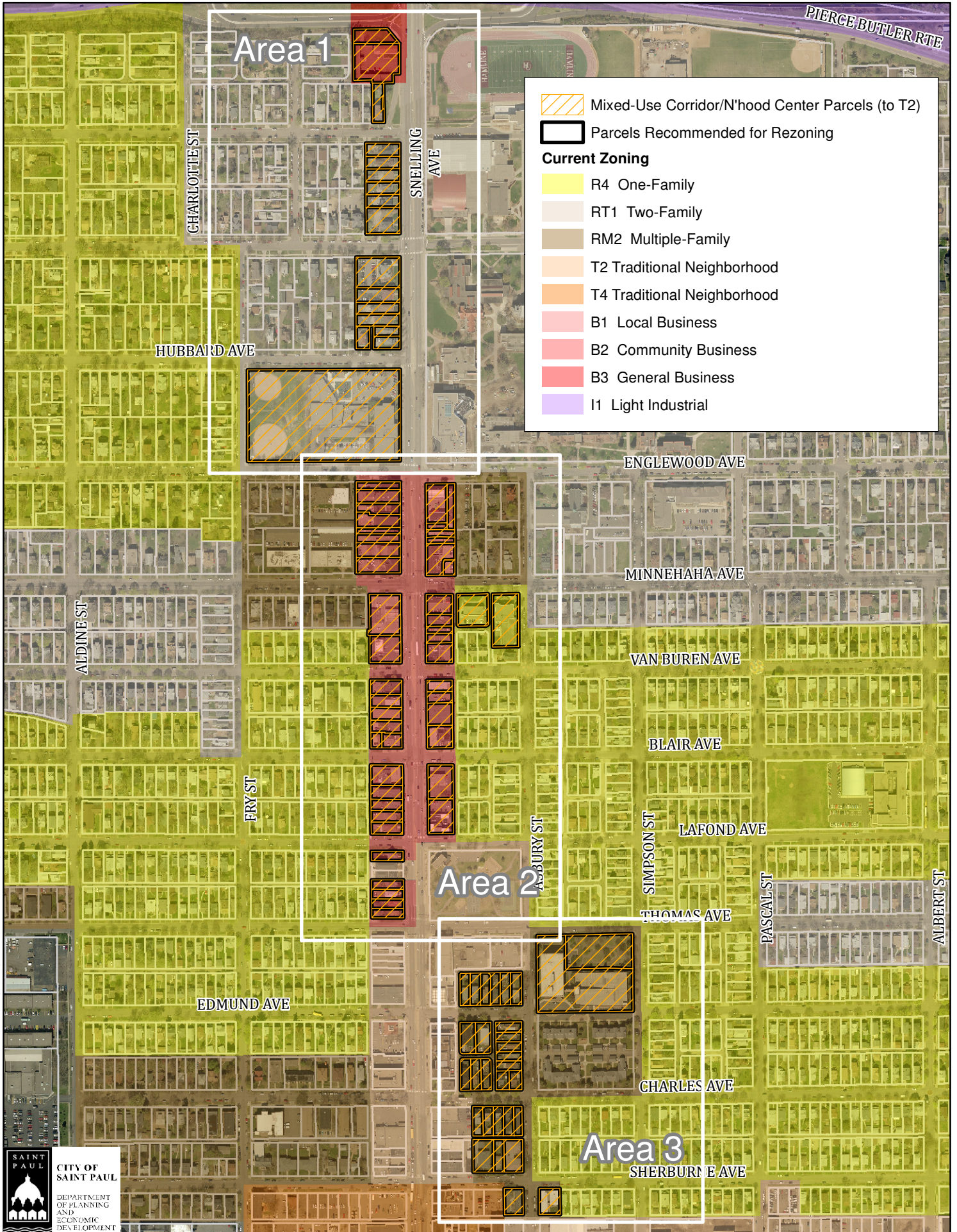
(District 11 Hamline Midway Mixed Use Corridors 40-Acre Zoning Study)

## Attachment 1: Recommended Zoning Changes

- Map 1: Recommended Zoning Changes – Snelling Avenue
- Map 2: Recommended Zoning Changes – Hamline Avenue



# Map 1: Recommended Zoning Changes - Snelling Avenue



# Map 2: Recommended Zoning Changes - Hamline Avenue

