



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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From: Planning Commission

Date: January 14, 2013

Re: West Side Community Plan

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2011 and continuing through the spring of 2012, the West Side Community Organization (WSCO) held a series of community conversations with residents and businesses to learn about their ideas and vision for the future of the West Side. Over 150 people participated in the visioning sessions, providing more than five hundred comments and recommendations for "Key Strategies." Developed by WSCO staff, Community Design Group, and over 300 residents, The West Side Community Plan was approved by the WSCO Board of Directors on August 13, 2012, and was submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration and adoption as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. City staff reviewed the draft for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Heritage Preservation Staff reviewed the draft Plan and brought it before the Heritage Preservation Commission on November 15, 2012. The Heritage Preservation Commission found the objectives in the West Side Community Plan to be a strong pro-preservation statement that supports the Historic Preservation Chapter in the Comprehensive Plan. The HPC found the West Side Community Plan to be consistent with the City's policies, with six recommended changes.

PUBLIC HEARING

During the public comment period both City and WSCO staff received comments from West Side neighborhood resident Carol M. Neumann. Ms. Neumann was concerned that additional attention should be paid to housing needs of seniors in the plan.

On December 14, 2012 a public hearing was held before the Planning Commission regarding the West Side Community Plan. Testimony was heard from three members of the community.

Testimony in support

Positive testimony was heard from three members of the community. First, Elena Gaarder, Executive Director of the District 3 Planning Council - West Side Community Organization (WSCO), stated that the plan process started with a review of all relevant and historic plans for consistency. WSCO then held nine community workshops to garner public input for the draft plan. A focus on implementation of the plan is key to WSCO and is already underway with strong buy-in from stakeholders participating in the West Side Initiative.

Karen Reid, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) spoke in support. She stated that her organization was in support of the plan and will be a participant in implementing housing and economic development actions. Both Ms. Gaarder and Ms. Reid were members of the task force convened for this small area plan.

Armando Camacho, President of Neighborhood House, also spoke in support of the plan. He stated he was impressed with the level of community outreach done by WSCO and with sense of ownership and commitment shown by the stakeholder groups involved.

A letter of support was submitted by Kelly Jameson of the St. Paul Port Authority. The letter commends WSCO on its planning process and community involvement. It also outlines the Port Authority's support for and inclusion in many of the plan's implementation strategies.

Also in support was a letter from Nina Axelson, Director of Public Relations of District Energy St. Paul. The letter states that District Energy has extended its distribution network into the West Side to provide building owners a choice in their energy supply. District Energy stated appreciation of the West Side's commitment to energy efficiency, a sustainable community and thriving businesses and anticipation for partnering with WSCO on the implementation of the plan.

A request to include a goal in the plan to rebuild the Green Stairs was proposed by neighborhood resident Matthew Pahs after the public hearing.

Testimony in opposition

No testimony in opposition, either verbal or written, was received.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

To accommodate the recommendations of the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Planning Commission recommends the following changes to the plan:

1. Insert a map within the Historic Preservation chapter or as an appendix that shows all designated and surveyed properties as a baseline and for supporting future survey work.
2. Include a listing of completed context studies that are applicable for the West Side.
3. Clarify strategy HP2.2 to read: Conduct new cultural resource surveys in accordance with the State Historic Preservation Office and Heritage Preservation Commission standards, including the development and collection of data and dissemination in electronic formats.
4. Insert a new strategy that states: Continue to support the preservation and maintenance of designated sites and encourage compatible uses so they continue to remain community assets.
5. Consider clarifying strategy HP4.3 to read: Assist developers with identifying historic preservation opportunities for economic development.
6. Add a sentence to HP2.1 that states that survey work should be carried out prior to implementing other strategies in the Plan. Also, completing survey work should become a higher priority in the Implementation Section on page 38.

To accommodate Ms. Neumann's concerns, the Planning Commission recommends the following language be inserted in the plan:

1. Add Strategy H1.5 - Develop additional senior housing options so elders can stay in this community when they can no longer stay in their home.
2. Add Strategy H2.5 - Develop additional options for seniors so they continue to inhabit, maintain and improve their homes.

To accommodate Mr. Pahs' concerns, the Planning Commission recommends the following language be inserted in the plan:

1. Add Strategy T1.7 – Pursue funding to reconstruct the Green Stairs copying the historic route and configuration.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission forwards the West Side Community Plan to the Mayor and City Council with a recommendation for adoption of the plan as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, pending approval by the Metropolitan Council.

Attachments:

1. Planning Commission Resolution to adopt the West Side Community Plan
2. West Side Community Plan draft