



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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DATE: April 6, 2016

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Neighborhood Planning Committee

RE: District 1 Community Plan public testimony review

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

A District 1 resident spoke at the public hearing with the following main points of testimony:

- Natural resources are one of District 1's most defining features.
- Much planning and community effort has gone into preserving natural resources, including the Highwood Development Policies that were recertified in 2009.
- Strategy LU4.4 should be revised in order to benefit the public and conform with the Highwood Development Policies, as such:
"LU4.4 - Ramsey County has determined the current use of Totem Town will be discontinued. Saint Paul and Ramsey County Parks Departments should facilitate an open process to implement the City Council-approved plan to retain this property in public ownership as open space and natural areas representative of the region's ecosystem."
- Strategy ENV5.1 should also refer to Pine Creek and Ogden Creek.
- Strategy ENV9.1 should also call for a crossing near Henry Park of Highway 61 and the railroad tracks.

The District 1 executive director spoke at the public hearing to:

- Clarify that, though the Highwood Development Policies were recertified in 2009, there has not been a community process regarding them since their initial adoption (1995).
- Provide background on the process of the District 1 Community Plan's creation.

The District 1 Community Council president spoke at the public hearing with the following main points of testimony:

- The planned Gold Line and the adopted Gold Line Station Area Plans have had a significant effect on the plan's Land Use chapter.
- Request that reference to the private sector leading Sun Ray redevelopment be deleted in order to clarify/preserve a City role in promoting those redevelopments.
- Request that a Totem Town moratorium be enacted if the facility closes, rather than being merely considered, so as to ensure a community process regarding the site's future.

Each of the three public hearing speakers also provided their prepared remarks, which are among the memo attachments. Besides those, no other letters have been received.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION INPUT

Since the public release of the draft plan in February, the Transportation Committee and the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) each reviewed the draft plan and provided input. The Transportation Committee recommends approval with no amendments. The HPC recommends approval with 14 proposed amendments:

1. Insert maps within the Historic Preservation & Community Character chapter or as an appendix that shows all surveyed properties as a baseline and for supporting future survey work.
2. Include a list of completed context studies that are applicable to the District 1 neighborhoods.
3. Identify the name and address of the property shown in the picture on page 41. How does it relate to historic preservation and/or community character?
4. Add: Work with the Historic Preservation Commission to educate property owners regarding historic preservation and to develop strategies for encouraging property owners to consider historic significance when making improvements.
5. Add: Develop partnerships with the Heritage Preservation Commission and preservation organizations to fund and promote preservation initiatives.
6. Add: Support and/or implement an ongoing survey program to identify and evaluate all types of historic resources and historic contexts in the District 1 Plan area, including buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, districts, and landscapes. Examples of District 1 resources to identify and evaluate include, but are not limited to: sites associated with individuals (e.g.: Walter N. Greaza, Kitt Clum, Sarah Tandy) or events, farmhouses, wetland, roadhouse, Totem Town, Point Douglas, early territory, Taylor Park, industrial sites (e.g.: North Star Steel Company, Red Rock Road, Rail/Switching Yards, Milwaukee Road), Pig's Eye Island Heron Rookery, Pigs Eye, the original site of Kaposia Village in the Pigs Eye area, etc...
7. Add: Support the designation of historic resources, such as buildings, structures, objects, archaeological sites, historic districts, and landscapes as Saint Paul heritage preservation sites or historic districts.
8. Add: Support programs, studies, and policies that serve to preserve its historical character.
9. Add: Support citizen-led preservation activities in the neighborhood.
10. Add: Promote the use of historic tax credits and develop strategies for economic development through historic preservation.
11. Add: Promote development that respects the distinctive community character and unique topography of the Plan area's four neighborhoods: Eastview, Conway, Battle Creek, and Highwood.
12. Add: Integrate Preservation Planning into the Broader Public Policy, Land Use Planning, and Decision-Making Processes.
13. Add: Prioritize the retention of historic resources over demolition when evaluating planning and development projects that require or request district council action, involvement, or funding.
14. Add: Protect undesignated historic resources that are eligible or potentially eligible for local or national designation.

ANALYSIS

The District 1 resident suggests removing the phrase “as driven by the private sector” from Strategy LU1.4. The phrase clarifies the anticipated redevelopment process, as laid out in the Gold Line Station Area Plans. However, removal of the phrase does not impact the main point of the strategy, that Sun Ray will be redeveloped with commercial/high-density residential uses with a traditional street grid. Also, adequate clarification of the anticipated process already exists in the Gold Line Station Area Plans. Therefore, it is recommended that the phrase “as driven by the private sector” be deleted in accordance with this request.

The District 1 resident’s suggestion to include Pine Creek and Ogden Creek as targets for grants to reduce pollution (Strategy ENV5.1) is appropriate, as is the additional crossing of Highway 61 and railroad facilities at Henry Park near Pig’s Eye Lake (ENV9.1). These additions further existing plans and should be included.

There was conflicting testimony with regard to Totem Town’s potential closure (LU4.4): (1) enact a development moratorium to allow a community process to determine the site’s future, or (2) retain the property in public ownership as open space, in accordance with the adopted Highwood Development Policies. First, a development moratorium is one tool that should be considered, but a plan document should not predetermine its use because it may or may not be the best tool for the situation – the decision should be left to future City Councils to consider given the situation at that time. There is no specific Comprehensive Plan guidance on development moratoria. Second, the Highwood Development Policies, including the clause addressing Totem Town, were last publicly debated in 1995 – they were recertified in 2009 as one of numerous plans recertified at that time, largely based on the plan’s continued relevance *in general* rather than a re-examination of all its details. Since 1995, the funding landscape has changed significantly, as have the composition of the community at-large and our City’s priorities for spending scarce parks and open space resources. A new community process and issue analysis regarding the future of the Totem Town site is warranted. No change is recommended to Strategy LU4.4.

The HPC’s first two proposed amendments involve including a map of surveyed properties and a list of relevant context studies. These additions should be included.

The HPC’s proposed amendment #3 suggests labeling the photograph on p41 and describing how it relates to the chapter topic. The photograph is of a house at 432 Point Douglas Road. However, no other photographs in the plan document are labeled – they are used to evoke a general sense of the topics, rather than to add substantively to the proposed policies. No labeling is recommended.

The remaining amendments proposed by the HPC generally restate existing Comprehensive Plan policies. Proposed amendment #13 should be rephrased to assume that the City is the actor. Otherwise, the amendments are in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and should be included.

The recommended amendments noted above have been incorporated into the attached draft plan document.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the attached draft resolution recommending approval of the District 1 Community Plan, as amended, and forward it to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration.

Attachments

1. Draft Planning Commission resolution
2. Draft District 1 Community Plan (with recommended changes incorporated)
3. Transportation Committee staff report & vote
4. HPC resolution & staff report
5. Public hearing testimony