



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

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TO: Heritage Preservation Commission
FROM: Amy Spong and Anton Jerve, PED
DATE: July 8, 2016 **UPDATED July 13**
RE: Street Design Manual and Complete Streets Action Plan Public Hearing

BACKGROUND

The *Street Design Manual* has been developed over the last five years by an interdepartmental (PED, Public Works, and Parks) staff team and consultants under the review of the Transportation Committee and departmental leadership. The Complete Streets Action Plan includes issues that were identified during the process of creating the Manual, but outside its scope. A memo summarizing the creation of the *Street Design Manual* and *Complete Streets Action Plan* can be found here:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/TranspoCommFinalMemo030916.pdf>

STREET DESIGN MANUAL

The draft Street Design Manual was created over the past five years with ongoing input from Transportation Committee and several community pilot projects. The lead consultant guiding the development of the project was Toole Design Group. The Manual:

- Establishes the central Street Design Manual for all City departments, as well as community stakeholders.
- Explains how projects proposed at the neighborhood level fit into citywide or regional multi-modal networks.
- Illustrates various street improvements and explains how they will affect and benefit multiple transportation modes and users.
- Provides examples of what a multimodal project will look like once it is complete.

The Street Design Manual is based largely on Complete Streets principles.

COMPLETE STREETS

Complete Streets is a movement broader than our city that reorients street design to consideration of context and needs of all users, rather than the traditional focus exclusively on traffic volume and moving cars efficiently. As defined by the State of Minnesota:

"Complete streets" is the planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities. Complete streets considers the needs of motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, bicyclists, and commercial and emergency vehicles moving along and across

roads, intersections, and crossings in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and recognizes that the needs vary in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

The City of Saint Paul recognizes the importance of this broader framework for considering street design. The streets of Saint Paul are the public “face” of the city. While many people recognize parks as public space, most people spend more time on streets than in parks. Streets compose about 24 percent of Saint Paul and are a major component of the public realm; as such, they have a major effect on how the city functions as well as how people feel about the city.

Streets have been rebuilt many times through the city’s history to better accommodate the changing needs of neighborhoods and businesses. The expectations for the right-of-way are dynamic - what was considered cutting-edge design 50 years ago may not be adequate by today’s standards. Though the demands on streets are continually changing; streets projects are typically 10- to 60-year investments. This makes it ever more important that we “get it right” in the design process. That means living up to the goals of our adopted “complete streets” policies, building flexibility in our design process to respond to change, and defining our best practices to ensure we continue to build on existing knowledge.

Moving into the 21st century, as the Mayor states in his introduction to the draft Street Design Manual:

Today we are asking [streets] to do even more. As a community concerned about our impact on the global environment, we are asking our streets to help us expand public transit, treat stormwater, and extend the city’s tree canopy. As a community concerned about improving public health, we are asking our streets to be safe and attractive places for people of all ages to walk and bike. As a central city challenged to accommodate a greater share of the region’s population, we are asking our streets to serve as gathering places for a more densely settled community.

These new demands are further highlighted with the following ongoing trends:

- Variable energy costs due to an unstable supply of oil worldwide lead to an increased number of people using transit and moving to urban areas where they can reduce automobile use.
- According to state projections the population over age 65 will increase 125 percent between 2005 and 2035. (<http://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/population/data/ourprojections/>) Ensuring there are transportation choices and safe streets for this group is vital to the livability of the city.
- Returning to the “neighborhood school” model for elementary schools in Saint Paul will increase the number of students walking to school.
- Nationally, due to limited funding sources, infrastructure funding is being routed to maintain existing roads and bridges rather than to building new projects.
- Despite growth in population, vehicle miles traveled have remained relatively flat since 2004. (http://www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/reports/traffic%20volume/2014_VMT_Report.pdf)
- Developments in technology, including smart phones and Big Data, allow new opportunities for analysis and real-time information, and have changed expectations for communication.

In 2009, the City Council passed a Complete Streets resolution (09-213) that recognizes that “livability includes the safe movement of people and goods along all public rights-of-way” and supports the formal incorporation of Complete Streets principles into City practice.

COMPLETE STREETS ACTION PLAN

The Complete Streets Action Plan outlines the next steps for implementation of Complete Streets policies, after adoption of the Street Design Manual. The Action Plan identifies next steps to implement Complete Streets-related goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan, specifically:

1. The City and community should explore traffic problems and options together, resulting in recommendations that will be the most likely to achieve the neighborhood's objectives.
2. Provide safe citywide connections to schools, libraries, parks, and recreation centers, with improved crossings and comfortable pedestrian environments at high demand destinations.
3. Design should be sensitive to the context and community in which it is located. Performance standards should be established with measurable outcomes.
4. Support transit-oriented design through zoning and design guidelines. Compact, street oriented design should be emphasized to promote walkability and transit use, especially in commercial corridors. Standards for building placement and design based primarily on the needs of the pedestrian should be enforced and expanded.
5. Develop a strategy for investing in a broad range of infrastructure projects, including, but not limited to, street and traffic improvements to support the growth of existing employment, services, parks, and schools.
6. Collaborate with non-profit, volunteer, and business organizations to coordinate bicycle counts at sample intersections and on selected routes. Regular counts will help the City better understand trends in bicycling citywide and prioritize improvements and maintenance.
7. Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety through effective law enforcement, detailed crash analysis, and engineering improvements to reduce the risk of crashes
8. Connect neighborhoods that have poor sidewalks or little access to trails and bike routes, especially east and north of Downtown.
9. Define parkway character, features, and amenities; clarify parkway designations; and assign improvement responsibilities and resources.
10. Develop clear standards and procedures to manage pedestrians and bicyclists in construction zones in order to maintain access to the greatest extent feasible.

Action items were identified during the process of developing the Street Design Manual.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONFORMANCE

The four strategies of complete streets that support the Comprehensive Plan are:

- Provide a safe and well-maintained system
- Enhance balance and choice
- Support active lifestyles and a healthy environment
- Enhance and connect neighborhoods

RELEASE OF PLAN SUMMARY FOR PUBLIC HEARING

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 27, 2016 and there was no testimony at the hearing but staff received one written testimony. The adopted Planning Commission Resolution is attached.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The HPC serves as an advisory body to the mayor and city council on municipal heritage preservation matters. Chapter 73.04(1) states the HPC shall review and comment on plans and studies which relate to the historic and architectural heritage of the city. Further, all studies transmitted to the mayor and city council *shall contain the recommendations of both the division of planning and the heritage preservation commission*. A draft resolution will be submitted for consideration by the HPC and a final copy will be forwarded to the division of planning, Planning Commission, Mayor and City Council.

PED staff introduced this project and plan to the HPC during their March 12, 2015 Business Meeting. There were some comments relayed and staff made those initial edits prior to the public hearing process by the Planning Commission. Those updates are: added summaries of Brick Street Policy (p. 16) and Chapter 73, Heritage Preservation Commission (p. 17); added to Background Section; references to historic preservation were added to the following pages in the Design Treatments Section:

- Sidewalks, p. 24
- Street Trees, p. 29
- Lighting, p. 37
- Bike Parking, p. 40
- Wayfinding, p. 43
- Stairways, p. 45

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The HPC should identify which policies relate to the historic preservation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and which policies that may be in conflict with historic preservation considerations. Once identified, the HPC should address consistency between the Street Design Manual and Complete Streets Action Plan and the Historic Preservation Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and demonstrate the interplay of preservation with many other livability and environmental aspects of the Manual and Plan, and its historic resources.

HPC comments should also address: the lack of updated survey and evaluation information available in order to incorporate preservation considerations into projects that involve streets and the City's right-of-way; need for context studies of city-owned resources, such as walls, stairs, bridges, streets, sidewalks and parkways; address the need to update historic district guidelines that address complete street principles but also balancing the requirement to preserve and maintain historic fabric and character of historic districts; address the need for proper evaluation of public infrastructure prior to funding and approving transportation projects that result in altering an historic streetscape.

Attachments

1. Planning Commission Resolution
2. Draft Heritage Preservation Commission Resolution (will be passed out at meeting)