



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
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Date: July 26, 2019  
To: Mayor Melvin Carter  
Council President Brendmoen and Members of the Saint Paul City Council  
From: Betsy Reveal, Chair, Saint Paul Planning Commission  
Subject: Design Standards Amendment to the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan* and Related Zoning Code Text Amendments

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## **BACKGROUND**

In 2017, the City Council directed the creation of design standards when it adopted the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan (Master Plan)* (Ord 17-40). Design standards support the development of a walkable, pedestrian and bike-friendly built environment, and encourage a sense of place. They are intended to address things like how the faces of buildings meet the street, what exterior building materials should be used, and landscaping. The standards will be added to the *Master Plan*, with Zoning Code amendments necessary for consistency.

Ryan Companies (Ryan) was awarded development rights to the Ford Site as the master developer, and requested amendments to the *Master Plan* in October of 2018. After recommendations from the Planning Commission, a version of those amendments was adopted by the City Council in April of 2019. While most of those changes were to existing *Master Plan* content, the design standards being considered now would be new material.

## **PROCESS**

A consultant team led by LHB, Inc. and supported by PlaceMakers and Forecast Public Art began working on the design standards in late fall of 2018. An inter-departmental City staff working group was created and met regularly to advise the consultant throughout the process. A focus group comprised of varied professionals and neighborhood representatives familiar with the area around the Ford Site was also assembled. The focus group met twice – once early in the process to provide guidance on overall approach and an outline of the standards, and once towards the end of the process to react to draft materials. Ryan was invited to, and participated in, both the working and focus groups.

City staff and the consultant presented at the Highland District Council's January 15, 2019 Community Development Committee meeting to provide a briefing on scope and schedule, and to answer questions. City staff hosted a public open house on April 23, 2019 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church to update interested parties on the work, provide draft materials, and listen to feedback.

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## Ford Design Standards – Planning Commission Recommendation

As an amendment to the *Master Plan* and per Sec 66.951 of the Zoning Code, the draft *Master Plan* and zoning text amendments are reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council. A public hearing was held at the Planning Commission on June 28, 2019. One person spoke at the public hearing and submitted written comments. In addition to that, written comments were received from two individuals and a resolution was submitted by the Community Development Committee of the Highland District Council.

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee (CNPC) of the Saint Paul Planning Commission discussed public comment and staff recommendations for changes to the public hearing draft at their July 17, 2019 meeting and recommended a revised version of the design standards and associated Zoning Code text amendments to the Planning Commission. On July 26, 2019, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to forward the draft to the Mayor and City Council with a recommendation to approve and amend the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan* and Zoning Code accordingly.

### **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT**

The majority of the comments were neither in support nor opposition to the draft, but consisted of suggestions or concerns that people felt the Commission should consider. There were several specific comments that were beyond the scope of the design standards and are not addressed in the recommended changes. All public comments are attached. The main points made by the public were as follows:

- The human scale and relationship between public and private space is important (fence/wall height, setback specificity, floor elevations)
- Proper function of the ROW is important (snow storage, pedestrian safety)
- Access to private development is important (safety at vehicular ingress/egress)
- Consider expanding material choices for both buildings and pavement
- Beware of inconsistencies between draft standards and other regulations

### **COMMENTS FROM OTHER CITY DEPARTMENTS**

The broad nature of the design standards has required frequent coordination with the Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Safety and Inspections, and the City Attorney's Office. That coordination continued through the public review period and informed every iteration of the design standards.

## RECOMMENDED CHANGES

Due to the large volume of feedback from the CNPC, the public and other City departments, significant changes to the public hearing draft were recommended. Most of the changes were to eliminate duplication of content already in the *Master Plan* or Zoning Code (such as height of boulevard plantings) and streamline material that addressed similar topics (such as instances of exterior building material descriptions and the building opening requirements). In addition, there was some material proposed to move to other areas of the *Master Plan* which is summarized as attached. There were, however, recommendations to substantially change or eliminate some content in the draft, such as:

- Reducing the specificity of setback requirements.
  - The public hearing draft included locations where setbacks were required to be more specific than the range outlined in the *Master Plan*, found in the Central Open Space Frontage standards (old S12) and the Gateway East Frontage standards (old S49). For building types allowed in the F3 district, setback distances are a range of 10'-20' for Townhouse, Multi-Family Low, and Multi-Family Medium building types; 5'-20' for Live/Work building type; 5'-15' for Mixed Residential & Commercial, Civic & Institutional, and Commercial & Employment building types. Limiting the maximum to 10' in the Central Open Space Frontage sets a definite build-to line for the first set and significantly restricts it for the second. Market pressure will likely push it to the minimum setback anyway, but if not, the differing depths of buildings would help to create more visual interest and varied space on what will be an open space edge. The Gateway East Frontage type sits in the context of proposed baseball fields to the north and apartment buildings with large setbacks east of Cleveland Avenue. A range of setbacks is required in the *Master Plan* to ensure a relationship with the street, as well as proposed standard G14 to require orientation to the corner. Considering the context and the other siting regulations, a more specific range seemed unnecessary.
- Eliminating a standard that prohibited different architectural styles and materials on townhouses.
  - It is likely and appropriate that different materials will be used on the exterior of buildings. The standards in general do not address architectural style.
- Eliminated a standard that townhouse facades needed to be a minimum of 85% brick.
  - Based on feedback received during the comment period, requiring such a high percentage of a single material could lead to a monotonous swath of townhouses on the western half of the site.
- Redefining how the border of the Civic Square would be treated.
  - The public hearing draft included a “green planting area” that was difficult to define. The language was adjusted to be more specific and performance based, saying that trees will define the perimeter of the square and planted close to the property line.
- Removing a requirement that gathering areas face public areas.
  - It is impossible to predict what the exact use, design, and context of future buildings will be, and specifying the internal organization of site-specific architectural elements without that information seemed inappropriate.

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Ford Design Standards – Planning Commission Recommendation

To bring the Zoning Code and proposed *Master Plan* amendments into alignment, Zoning Code text amendments are also necessary, such as:

- Adding F districts to Sec 60.301 Zoning districts established
- Adding F districts to Sec 64.503 re: signs
- Clarifying that site plan review addresses all development in F districts, including one- and two-family dwellings
- Adding a process for minor and major amendments

A complete red-lined version of the proposed text amendments is attached.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Commission recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the July 18, 2019 draft of design standards amendments to the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan* and corresponding Zoning Code text amendments.

### **Attachments in Legistar:**

1. July 18 draft of Ford Design Standards Amendments to the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan*
2. July 18 draft of Zoning Code Text Amendments related to the *Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan*
3. List of draft updated material in the *Master Plan*
4. Written comment from June 28, 2019 public hearing
5. Planning Commission Resolution 19-39

### **Cc:**

Dr. Bruce Corrie, PED Director  
City Attorney's Office  
Highland District Council  
Tony Barranco, Ryan Companies