



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Melvin Carter, Mayor

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DATE: August 29, 2019
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Neighborhood and Comprehensive Planning Committee
RE: Frogtown Neighborhood Plan (the SMAPL)

BACKGROUND:

In 2016, the Frogtown Neighborhood Association, community members, CURA, and City Staff began working on Frogtown's Small Area Plan (SMAPL). Over the course a year, the SMAPL team engaged an estimated 2,500 Frogtown residents through community healing meals, Frogtown forums, steering committee meetings, neighborhood events, surveys, voice recordings, and social media. This extensive public engagement process led to the creation of Saint Paul's first ever graphic novel plan, and a vision to sculpt Frogtown into a mixed use and mixed income Arts, Education, and Entrepreneurship centered Urban Village.

The intent of creating a plan in this graphic novel format was to demystify often times complex planning processes, by creating a document that the community could relate to and see themselves represented in. The graphic novel contains all of the elements that you would typically see in a neighborhood district plan, but these elements are uniquely presented in this graphic novel format by having the characters represent the policy chapters in the plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING:

The planning commission held a public hearing on August 9, 2019. 2 people spoke in favor of the plan and no one spoke in opposition. The public hearing was open for written comments until Monday August 12, 2019. No additional written testimony was received.

POLICY CHAPTERS AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

The SMAPL has 7 policy chapters; Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Arts and Education, Health and Wellness, Economic Vitality, and Resource Allocation. The Arts and Education, Health and Wellness, Economic Vitality, and Resource Allocation chapters are not found in the draft city-wide 2040 Comprehensive Plan and are unique to the SMAPL. Although these policy chapters are unique to the SMAPL, there are no inconsistencies with the current 2030 Comprehensive Plan or draft 2040 Comprehensive Plan. There are also chapters in the Comprehensive Plan, such as Heritage and Cultural Preservation, which do not appear in the SMAPL. In cases where the neighborhood's district plan does not have chapters that are found in the Comprehensive Plan, the policies in the city-wide Comprehensive Plan chapters still apply. The absence of a policy chapter in the SMAPL which is found in the Comprehensive Plan does not constitute an inconsistency with the comprehensive plan.

POLICIES:

LAND USE:

L1. Initiate a forty-acre study to determine the appropriate zoning in urban neighborhoods and along major thoroughfares throughout the district.

L1.1 Study the pros, cons, and feasibility of T1 zoning in Frogtown's urban neighborhoods, specifically in regards to its ability to cultivate the Urban Village vision embedded within our plan.

L1.2 Determine the appropriate zoning for non-conforming commercial uses in Frogtown's urban neighborhoods.

L2. Support the development of new urban gardens, farms, and parks throughout the district, in an effort to ensure that one or more of these uses are within a quarter mile of every resident in Frogtown.

~~L3. Make lots that do not meet the minimum lot size for their underlying zoning district available for agricultural uses, open space, and small or tiny house development.~~

L3. Support agricultural uses, public art, and small or tiny house development on sub-standard or splinter lots throughout the district.

L4. Promote the development of transitional or permanent urban gardens on publicly owned vacant lots throughout the district.

L5. Support the retention and development of new missing middle housing types in Frogtown's urban neighborhoods, such as duplexes, townhomes, and medium density residential apartments that are compatible with the scale of existing development.

L6. Take a "Design Thinking" approach when developing new infrastructure and public space (Design Thinking is a Bottom-Up, Human-Centered Design and Research methodology that's hinged on community process).

~~L7. Promote neighborhood led tactical urbanism in Frogtown as a means to spur policy changes.~~

L8. Support the incorporation of publicly accessible open space into new multifamily residential and mixed-use developments.

L9. Support efforts to minimize the potential displacement of existing residents and businesses near transit lines.

L9.1 Explore the feasibility of developing an inclusionary zoning overlay as a means to counteract potential displacement.

L9.2 Work to develop a Frogtown Land Trust as a means to counteract potential displacement of existing residents and businesses.

L10. Support the development and rehabilitation of commercial, mixed use, and multifamily residential uses along and near arterial and collector streets that are served by public transit.

L11. Ensure that there is a transition of building massing and height from higher density development along arterial and collector streets to lower density uses in urban neighborhoods.

L12. Promote a 1:2 ratio of wall height to street width for new mixed use and multifamily residential development along arterial and collector streets.

~~L13. Oppose new drive-through uses for quick service and formula restaurants throughout the district.~~

L13. Discourage the establishment of new drive-through uses proximate to residential land uses.

L14. Explore the feasibility of developing an inclusionary zoning overlay, or a citywide ordinance, as a means to counteract potential displacement and increase the number of affordable units.

L15. Work to develop a Frogtown Land Trust as a means to counteract potential displacement of existing residents and businesses and to increase the amount of affordable units and commercial spaces.

L16. Develop “do no harm” policies in census tracts designated as opportunity zones in Frogtown.

HOUSING:

H1. Support the reestablishment and rehabilitation of non-conforming duplex and multifamily residential uses in Frogtown’s urban neighborhoods

H2. Support amendments to the zoning code to allow Accessory Dwelling Units in Frogtown.

H3. Encourage amendments to the building code and the zoning code that will lessen the regulatory barriers for the development of tiny homes.

H4. Encourage a reduction of fees and a simplification of the permitting process for housing repairs, additions, and the development of new housing.

H5. Utilize the Gentrification Study by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs to inform future housing policies in Frogtown.

H6. Encourage and support the development of more housing cooperatives.

H7. Promote the development of quality micro-apartments in Frogtown as a viable affordable housing option.

H8. Support short-term rentals and bed and breakfasts throughout the district.

H9. Promote the development of new cohousing and eco-villages throughout the district.

H10. Encourage new multifamily housing developments to incorporate features in their designs that foster sharing, and resident interaction.

H11. Support home occupations, live work units, artist studios, and other home based commercial enterprises throughout the district.

H12. Support the development of tiny house cluster developments.

H13. Work to increase the number of owner occupied single family houses and multifamily family structures.

TRANSPORTATION:

T1. Advocate for the construction of traffic-calming and pedestrian safety improvements such as medians, pedestrian refuge islands, neighborhood traffic circles, speed bumps, flashing beacon, leading pedestrian intervals, and bump-outs throughout the district along major corridors and bicycle boulevards, such as Charles Avenue.

T2. Redesign Rice Street to prioritize pedestrians over automobiles.

T2.1 Explore reintroducing on-street parking to Rice Street within the Capitol Rice district.

T2.2 Explore eliminating or reducing the lane widths on Rice Street and expanding the width of the sidewalks.

T2.3 Explore planting new street trees, installing planters, new benches, and installing pedestrian scale lighting on Rice Street.

T3. Advocate for bike sharing facilities, such as Lime or Nice Ride kiosks, throughout the interior of Frogtown and neighboring districts, as opposed to solely near light rail stops, to encourage biking locally.

T4. Improve and embed Bike Lane/Trail maps and signage along bike paths

T5. Advocate for the creation of a neighborhood connector bus with surrounding districts (North End, Midway, Summit U).

T6. Design sidewalks, alleyways, and parking lots to be spaces where community members are encouraged to engage with one another.

T7. Redesign Dale Street to become a focal point within the district that emphasizes pedestrian use over automobiles.

T8. Explore the concept of transforming Victoria into a green street that would incorporate storm water management features and edible plants in the street design, from Frogtown Farms to the proposed Rondo Land Bridge.

T9. Support construction and implementation of new multimodal connections, including buildout of the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan and pursuing sidewalk infill opportunities.

ARTS AND EDUCATION:

AE1. Create a framework to streamline connections between residents and education providers to ensure they have the skills required for employment.

AE1.1 Better understand and utilize the skills and knowledge of Frogtowners, and encourage community skill shares.

AE2. Support the expansion of technological resources, such as computers in schools and libraries as well as affordable citywide Wifi, to ensure every Frogtowner has access to a computer and/or the Internet.

AE2.1 Study overall Internet access in Frogtown and the technological barriers that exist within the community.

AE3. Advocate for the creation of more comprehensive internships, on-the-job training, and after-school programs.

AE4. Integrate topics related to entrepreneurship, cooperatives, sustainability, and design into public education programs.

AE5. Improve programming, capacity, and staff of area recreation centers to better, more adequately utilize facilities, increase recreational options, and provide community members additional education opportunities.

AE6. Support the revitalization of the Victoria Theatre so it can serve as a hub for arts based education/programming, performances, and community engagement within Frogtown.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

HW1. Increase the number of recreational opportunities that reflect the diversity of cultures, resources, and ages within the district. This would include more sports fields, programmed activities for youth and adults, and holistic healing/ wellness centered spaces

HW1.1. Better connect community members with resources and opportunities that will enable them to hold space, commune, learn from, and heal with one another.

HW2. Connect Frogtown to Saint Paul's park system by extending existing bicycle lanes and paths.

HW2.1. Connect the Central Corridor to Como Park and the River with bike and pedestrian trails.

HW3. Build upon successes—such as Greening Frogtown, WFNU, the Frogtown Neighborhood Association Website, and Frogtown Neighbors Group—and continue to explore methods by which residents can become aware of community activities and more systematically involved in the decisions made on their behalf by government entities.

HW5. Limit the number of Formula and Quick Service Restaurants especially near schools, senior housing, recreation centers, hospitals and churches.

HW6. Encourage the development of new shared renewable energy systems such as solar gardens, wind turbines, community solar programs, and district wide energy systems.

HW7. Support the ecologically and fiscally sustainable rehabilitation of existing building stock by increasing energy efficiency and incorporating renewable energy systems.

HW8. Support the creation of programs to finance the development of renewable energy systems to ensure that these systems can be developed at low initial costs to residents and businesses in the district.

HW9. Support the work of Tree Frogs to increase the amount of tree canopy in the district.

HW10. Support the work of Tree Frogs and other entities in developing healthy soils to support urban agriculture and urban forestry.

ECONOMIC VITALITY:

EV1. Make a concerted effort to rebrand Frogtown as a vibrant, livable, culture-rich community in order to attract community oriented residents and businesses to the area, in hopes of spurring economic vitality.

EV1.1 Explore a bottom-up approach that is community lead and organized to designate Frogtown as a Cultural District.

EV2. Encourage companies that locate into the district to hire directly from the community.

EV3. Develop a community process of working with responsible entities to determine how under-utilized commercial property can be restored to productive uses.

EV3. Work with businesses and local organizations to initiate a “buy local” campaign to highlight the goods and services available within the district.

EV4. Create an entrepreneurship policy framework and entrepreneurship policy toolkit to identify best practices for cultivating an ecosystem of entrepreneurship in Frogtown.

EV5. Provide tax credits to property owners who farm vacant or under-utilized lots, as such activities create food sources, economic opportunity, and civic engagement in otherwise blighted areas.

EV6. Allow licensed produce vendors to sell “whole and uncooked agricultural, plant-based items, including, but not limited to, fruits, vegetables, legumes, edible grains, nuts, spices, herbs and cut flowers” on moveable stands.

EV6.1 Allow vendors within Frogtown more flexibility when deciding where their food stands are located and the length of time in which they’re able to operate.

EV7. Create and/or subsidize commercial kitchens in Frogtown so they can be economic incubators for budding food enterprise.

EV8. Facilitate the temporary use of empty commercial spaces and lots by offering incentives for temporary leases and by penalizing property owners and banks for allowing spaces to remain vacant.

EV9. Better equip PED with the knowledge and resources to support cooperatives and other community enterprises.

EV9.1 Provide funding for and work with existing non-profits that have knowledge of and connection to communities where cooperatives are likely to be successful in an effort to incubate new cooperatives.

EV9.2 Provide grants, loans, and in-kind support to cooperatives, and facilitate or act as intermediaries to secure other financing opportunities for cooperatives.

EV10. Promote the equitable distribution of public funding by working to create a job training program for local residents focused on solar installation and sales.

EV11. Support efforts to create more living wage jobs in Frogtown that are focused on providing more employment and training opportunities for members of the community.

EV12. Prioritize local hiring and training for projects that receive public financing such as the development of new infrastructure and subsidized construction projects.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION:

RA1. Amend District Council funding policy to put more emphasis on poverty, non- English speaking residents, and access to Employment within district, so more active councils within resource deficient districts, like Frogtown, are better able to increase capacity without relying so heavily on grant funding.

OTHER PLANS:

The District 7 Neighborhood Plan (2007) should be decertified when it is superseded by the SMAPL (2019).

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends that the planning adopts the Frogtown District 7 Plan (SMAPL), and forwards the plan to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration.