

Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division Report
Small Area Plan/Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Date: November 18th, 2006

Project Name: Seward Longfellow Greenway Area Land Use and Pre-Development Study

Submitted By: CPED-Planning Division

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Neighborhood Organizations:

- Seward Neighborhood Group
- Longfellow Community Council

Current Minneapolis Plan Designations:

- Industrial/Business Park Opportunity Area -- Seward/Hiawatha
- Major Housing Site -- Midtown Greenway
- Transit Station Area -- Lake Street/Midtown
- Commercial Corridors -- East Lake

Background

The purpose of the Seward and Longfellow Greenway Area Land Use and Pre-Development Study (hereafter Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan) was to develop policy direction for land use and development along Phase 3 of the Midtown Greenway. This study evaluated the long-term viability and appropriateness of existing land uses along the corridor, included a suggested land use plan for future uses, and explored particular development concepts for selected opportunity sites.

The study and its land use plan were prepared for project partners that included Hennepin Community Works, Seward Redesign, Seward Neighborhood Group, and Longfellow Community Council. It was funded through a grant from Hennepin County Transit & Community Works and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The project was guided by a steering committee and by input obtained at public workshops. The Longfellow Community Council approved the plan October 21st, 2004. The board of the Seward Neighborhood Group approved the plan on October 27th, 2004. The 45-day review period began on November 1st, 2006 and ended on December 15th, 2006.

The City's planning effort for Phases 1 and 2 of the Midtown Greenway established conventions for land use and development types. These conventions have been replicated for Phase 3 of the Midtown Greenway, informed by the Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan. This adaptation was completed to create a consistent policy framework for the entire Greenway.

Phase 3 of the Midtown Greenway runs between Hiawatha Avenue and the Mississippi River Parkway and primarily includes a mix of both large and small scale industrial and commercial service uses. However, low-density residential uses exist nearby, and Anne Sullivan School and Brackett Park front the Greenway. Phase 3 of the Midtown Greenway is different from Phases 1 and 2 in a number of key ways:

- There is no trench. The trail is at-grade in the western portion and becomes grade separated as it rises above the surrounding area toward the river.
- Active rail service is present, associated with the few remaining rail customers along the CP Rail corridor south of Lake Street.
- Discussions surrounding a streetcar in the Midtown Greenway do not include Phase 3.
- Larger industrial parcels are more predominant. A portion of the Greenway (west of 27th Avenue) falls within the Seward/Hiawatha Employment District, as designated in the Industrial Land Use and Employment Plan, recently adopted by the City Council.
- The relationship of the corridor to surrounding streets and parcels is somewhat unique as no portion of the corridor is exactly parallel.
- Phase 3 is further from Lake Street than Phases 1 and 2, following an alignment adjacent to 27th Street rather than 29th Street.

Plan Summary

The Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan attempts to establish a long-term transitional policy framework for a part of the city that includes Seward Industrial Park as well as areas to the east more appropriate for long-term redevelopment to residential uses. The public involvement process identified potential sites adjacent to the Greenway for detailed consideration. In addition to establishing a policy direction for these sites, site planning and development feasibility analysis were done as part of the “pre-development” component of the planning process. In each of these cases, the sites have the potential to alter the landscape and create inertia for future change. These sites include industrial uses adjacent to important neighborhood institutions that border the Greenway: Anne Sullivan School and Brackett Park.

The Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan supports the continued base of employment in the neighborhood. With adoption of the Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan, the City established firm support for industrial uses west of 27th Avenue. This is an area that is solidly industrial, contiguous, and which has traffic and circulation patterns that do not interfere with residential streets. With some notable exceptions that include truck activity at the Metro Produce site, the Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan makes the case that land use conflicts associated with the larger industrial sites east of 27th Avenue are relatively minor. The Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan envisions that these industrial neighbors remain, but acknowledges the long-term potential for residential redevelopment.

The plan attempts to resolve questions associated with an “Island of Residential”, an industrially zoned area of low-density residential uses sandwiched between industrial uses. The plan’s original maps suggest that this area become a “live-work” area. The text better describes the intent of this area, which is to support redevelopment of industrial uses to ones that include a mix of greenway-facing residential and small-scale workshop and office uses. Such a broad scenario also includes

the envisioned adaptive re-use of the Ivy Building (p. II-29), an attractive building currently home to industrial uses.

Adapted Land Use Policy Maps

The adapted land use policy maps apply a mapping convention informed by the Seward/Longfellow Greenway Plan that includes both land use and development types maps:

Key mapping tasks included:

Identifying a plan boundary

The plan boundary is similar in width to that for Phases 1 and 2 and incorporates areas specifically addressed in the study (p. I-8 and elsewhere). It is not as large as the context area considered in the plan (pp. III-10 through III-12).

Resolving alternative visions of “Live-Work” illustrated in the plan versus described in the text

The plan map indicates an area for future “Live-Work” (p. I-8). This concept embraces both adaptive re-use as well as new development along the Greenway. The plan describes the area a little differently than the map (p. II-12, 2nd paragraph). These definitions of live-work fit within a variety of regulatory options that include home occupation regulations, the Office-Residence zoning district and the Industrial Living Overlay District. As a result, the proposed adapted land use policy plan maps shows a combination of 1) medium density residential facing the greenway with low density residential uses behind; and 2) transitional industrial uses.

Designating land uses throughout the plan boundary

In some cases, the land use plan map in the study document provides detailed residential density information related to opportunity sites. In other cases, though discussed in the text, the map does not specifically designate future land uses.

Adapted map designations include the following:

- Development scenarios identified in the study document (pp. II-24 and II-30) are consistent with the designation of Medium-density housing (10-50 units per acre). In particular, these sites include those identified “opportunity sites” that could have a catalyst effect for future change in the corridor.
- Single-family areas not immediately adjacent to the Greenway are designated as Low-density housing (up to 15 units per acre) and include the single-family areas that are currently zoned I-1 in the “Island of Residential” west and east of 29th Avenue. Though the study document’s land use map identifies these particular areas as “Live-Work” (p. I-8), home occupations remain possible and are the most appropriate use for these locations.
- Industrial uses that are part of the City’s Employment Districts are designated as Light/medium industrial.
- Areas outside of the City’s Employment District that are designated for future industrial activity are described as “Transitional Industrial”. These are areas where there is often strong support

for jobs, where there is more potential for conflicts with adjoining land uses, and where the City does not wish to discourage continued employment uses. However, these are also areas where the City would support a transition to residential redevelopment when the market would support redevelopment.

Identifying Development District types

The Development District designations identify a range of residential building forms that may be appropriate for the area. Details and suggested building forms are included in sheets accompanying the maps. Sites were mapped as follows:

- Low-density housing areas are designated as Type I: Neighborhood Oriented, which could include single-family, row houses and small apartments.
- Opportunity sites and Transitional Industrial areas are designated as Type II: Urban Oriented, which include row houses and apartment buildings.
- The Minnehaha Mall site is designated as Type III: Transit Oriented, which may include buildings exceeding five stories.
- Areas that are part of the City's Employment District are not identified with a Development District type, as these are residential building types.

Compatibility with Comprehensive Plan

The Plan complements the comprehensive plan and other planning activities in the area. Within the study area and its environs, there are a variety of comprehensive plan designated land use features:

Industrial / Business Park Opportunity Area: Seward/Hiawatha

The Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan defines the extent of the long-term Employment District. Other large industrial areas in the plan are identified in the adapted land use policy maps as "transitional". These are locations where residential redevelopment would be supported under certain conditions. Long-term policies would be to support industrial uses as long as there is market for such uses, paying particular attention to land use compatibility and site plans.

Major Housing Site: Midtown Greenway

The plan identifies areas and targeted opportunities for future housing redevelopment.

Transit Station Area: Lake Street/Midtown

The plan's adapted land use policy plan maps designate the Minnehaha Mall/Target site as high-density transit oriented development (preferred mixed-use), consistent with previous planning

Commercial Corridors: East Lake Street

Though further from the Greenway west of Hiawatha, the plan acknowledges the presence and importance of Lake Street. Consistent with the absence of intersecting commercial corridors or commercial nodes, the plan does not propose new retail commercial areas. New employment uses are envisioned as part of live/work or adaptive re-use scenarios.

Major Areas of Policy Concern and Implementation

The accompanying table includes comments from City staff regarding the plan's content as well as responses from CPED-Planning. Some of the key issues include the following:

○ “Live-Work” land use designation

The City does not have a live-work designation per se. This issue is discussed above and in the table.

○ Erroneous/outdated language regarding non-conforming use rights

Clarification is made regarding the rights of owners of non-conforming uses and the procedure to request changes to and/or expansion of such uses.

○ Conflicts between plan ideas and zoning standards

In some cases, references to zoning are incorrect (e.g., Midtown Greenway Zoning Overlay District) or suggestions for development may involve conflicts with zoning requirements. Staff recommends clarifications regarding zoning. These conflicts do not compromise the spirit of the plan's recommendations.

○ Extension of 34th Ave. S. across the Greenway, including a potential at-grade crossing

Staff recommends that any extension of 34th Avenue not include an additional point of conflict between bicyclists and automobiles.

○ Feasibility of meeting principles related to industrial development and lack of implementation mechanism toward those ends

Staff acknowledge the challenges associated with meeting multiple objectives. Furthermore, implementation requires a variety of mechanisms that include zoning and site plan regulations/enforcement, property owner engagement, marketing strategies, and performance standards tied to public assistance.

○ Vacation or extension of 27th Street

Twenty-Seventh Street is not a continuous street on the north side of the Greenway. The plan suggests the vacation of a segment between 29th and 30th Avenues. This has the effect of increasing the developable area of the Gamber Roofing property, but further reducing the continuity of the street. Community Planning staff understand that the public was exposed to an idea that would extend 27th Street for purposes of truck access to industrial properties. Staff supports the extension of 27th Street, but only as a local access component of residential redevelopment adjacent to the Greenway. Truck traffic should continue to use the designated truck route of 26th Street.

○ North/south “green connector” streets

The plan did not specifically consider land uses or redevelopment potential along these routes nor did it identify feasibility or funding rationale for transforming these local streets. Other efforts are more appropriate for identifying and implementing pedestrian/bicycle improvements. This concept could be further explored, but it should not be considered policy for these streets.

○ Managing change and avoiding new land use conflicts

It is the position of staff that the identified opportunity sites are unlikely to cause undue new friction between land uses. However, any changes in the transitional industrial area will require more careful consideration. Proposals in these locations will likely require some kind of city assistance and engagement.

Future Related Actions

- **Comprehensive plan changes.** This small area plan will be an amendment to the city's comprehensive plan, and its Future Land Use map will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan's citywide Future Land Use map.
- **Rezoning study.** Zoning changes compatible with this plan's land use recommendations would be made through a future rezoning study
- **Development review.** Future development proposals for property in the Midtown Greenway Area would require Planning Commission review of development applications such as rezonings, conditional use permits, and site plan review. The Planning Commission also has a role in recommending whether proposed land sales and the establishment of redevelopment districts are in conformance with the city's comprehensive plan.

Staff Recommendation

That the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the Seward Longfellow Land Use and Pre-Development Study document as small area plan and as an articulation of and amendment to the comprehensive plan's policies, subject to review and approval by the Metropolitan Council, and subject to the creation of a companion document to be distributed with and accompany the document and which will include:

1. The adapted Land Use and Development District Maps
2. Development District and Building Type illustrations and descriptions
3. Corrections, changes, and clarifications recommended by staff, as identified in the attached Table of Comments and Staff Responses.

Reference Materials / Attachments:

- Seward Longfellow Land Use and Pre-Development Study
- Adapted Land Use and Development District Maps
- Table of Comments and Staff Responses
- Written Public Comments
- The official plan website:
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/planning/seward-longfellow.asp