

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division**  
15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Urban Design Plan

**Date:** February 2, 2009

**Project Name:** 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Urban Design Plan

**Planning Staff and Phone:** Joe Bernard, (612) 673-2422

**Ward:** 3

**Neighborhood Organizations:** Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association

**Existing Minneapolis Plan Designations:**

- 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE is a Community Corridor

**Zoning Plate Number:** 15

### **Background and Public Process**

The Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association initiated a neighborhood-driven process to develop an urban design plan for a three and a half block portion of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE between the railroad tracks and 5<sup>th</sup> St SE. This document builds on the neighborhood's master plan, which was completed in 2003. Subsequent planning work, completed in 2007, focused on direction for specific redevelopment sites, including the area along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. Both of these previous planning efforts have been adopted by the City Council and are being incorporated into the city's comprehensive plan. The planning process involved substantial community input and has been approved by the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association.

The draft plan was made available for public review on December 19, 2008, on the City of Minneapolis website ([http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/marcy\\_holmes\\_15th\\_ave\\_plan.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/marcy_holmes_15th_ave_plan.asp)). The 45-day public comment period ended February 1, 2009. The neighborhood continues to work with city staff to ensure the plan is consistent with adopted city policy as the document moves through the approval process, and additional comments are submitted.

### **Overview**

The 15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan builds on the existing land use policy features designated in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*, the City's comprehensive plan, by giving them more specificity in terms of land use, building scale, and design. The portion of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE in the study area is designated as a Community Corridor, and the plan is consistent with comprehensive plan guidance for this type of land use feature.

Generally, the purpose of this document is to articulate to the development community and potential implementation partners the community expectations for new, aggressive, high-quality development on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. The document outlines a design strategy, makes recommendations, and shows conceptual plans for the three and a half block area.

The plan is divided into the following chapters: Background and Setting, Design Strategy, and Design Guidelines. The land use section for the plan follows the land use feature guidance from the Comprehensive Plan but gives more specificity regarding potential development density.

During the planning process, the neighborhood identified a series of goals for the study area, including:

- Buildings, public spaces, and streetscapes that add visual variety to the neighborhood.
- High-quality architecture that prioritizes appropriate proportion and massing over total building height.
- New public spaces that add to the neighborhood's sense of place.
- Streets and sidewalks that are pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-friendly.
- A range of housing types, including affordable housing, that attract staff, researchers, students, and others interested in living near the University.
- Stabilization of the historical residential neighborhood core through redevelopment at neighborhood edges.
- Preservation of historical buildings where appropriate.
- A new SE library as part of a mixed-use redevelopment.
- Space for U-tech expansion.
- Shared parking with Dinkytown.
- Elimination of blighted and poorly maintained properties.
- Additional market support for local businesses.

### **Comprehensive Plan Consistency**

An analysis of how the 15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan document relates to and is consistent with designated land use features from *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* follows in the matrix below. Adoption of policy guidance for this area as part of the City's comprehensive plan lays the groundwork for studying and possibly changing the zoning for the area to ensure that future development can occur according to the plan.

Applicable TMP Topic	15 <sup>th</sup> Avenue SE Urban Design Plan Proposed Policy	TMP Consistency
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The primary use should be residential for individuals, students, and families who desire access to the University and Downtown. A range of unit types and price points should be offered.</li> <li>Aggregate lots into increments that can be developed with appropriate densities. Existing high quality buildings should be preserved, if possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy 1.9: Through attention to the mix and intensity of land uses and transit service, the City will support development along Community Corridors that enhances residential livability and pedestrian access.</b></p> <p>1.9.5 Encourage the development of low- to medium-density housing on Community Corridors to serve as a transition to surrounding low-density residential areas.</p> <p>1.9.6 Promote more intensive residential development along Community Corridors near intersections with Neighborhood Commercial Nodes and other locations where it is compatible with existing character.</p> <p><b>Policy 3.1: Grow by increasing the supply of housing.</b></p> <p>3.1.1 Support the development of new medium- and high-density housing in appropriate locations throughout the city.</p> <p><b>Policy 3.6: Foster complete communities by preserving and increasing high quality housing opportunities suitable for all ages and household types.</b></p> <p>3.6.1 Promote the development of housing suitable for people and households in all life stages that can be adapted to accommodate changing housing needs over time.</p> <p>3.6.2 Promote housing development in all communities that meets the needs of households of different sizes and income levels.</p>
Nonresidential Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-residential uses, such as limited retail, university offices, incubator space, or a new SE library could be located on the southern most block, adjacent to Dinkytown</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy 1.5: Promote growth and encourage overall city vitality by directing new commercial and mixed use development to designated corridors and districts.</b></p> <p>1.5.1 Support an appropriate mix of uses within a district or corridor with attention to surrounding uses, community needs and preferences, and availability of public facilities.</p> <p><b>Policy 1.9: Through attention to the mix and intensity of land uses and transit service, the City will support development along Community</b></p>

		<p align="center"><b>Corridors that enhances residential livability and pedestrian access.</b></p> <p>1.9.1 Support the continued presence of existing small-scale retail sales and commercial services along Community Corridors.</p>
Public Realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15th Avenue SE should be the unifying feature. It should be developed as a pedestrian and bicycle promenade connecting Van Cleve Park to the University of Minnesota.</li> <li>• Create a strong public realm by expanding the sidewalk, improving the landscaping, setting buildings back 15 feet from the sidewalk and creating lively facades.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy 10.16: Design streets and sidewalks to ensure safety, pedestrian comfort and aesthetic appeal.</b></p> <p>10.16.1 Encourage wider sidewalks in commercial nodes, activity centers, along community and commercial corridors and in growth centers such as Downtown and the University of Minnesota.</p> <p>10.16.2 Provide streetscape amenities, including street furniture, trees, and landscaping, that buffer pedestrians from auto traffic, parking areas, and winter elements.</p> <p><b>Policy 7.6: Continue to beautify open spaces through well designed landscaping that complements and improves the city’s urban form on many scales – from street trees to expansive views of lakes and rivers.</b></p> <p>7.6.3 Invest in the greening of streets, particularly those that connect into and supplement the parks and open spaces network.</p> <p>7.6.7 Maintain multimodal transportation corridors to link open spaces and parks with surrounding neighborhoods.</p>
Transitions and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development should acknowledge different edge conditions (university and neighborhood) and transition gracefully with appropriate scales and building types.</li> <li>• Entrances to the neighborhood should be marked with strong corner buildings and building elements.</li> <li>• The lower floors of the development should respond to the surrounding context</li> <li>• Upper floors should be sculpted to minimize shadowing on existing residential buildings and public spaces and to maximize views</li> <li>• All parking should be located mid-block primarily in structures above or below</li> </ul>	<p><b>Policy 1.2: Ensure appropriate transitions between uses with different size, scale, and intensity.</b></p> <p>1.2.1 Promote quality design in new development, as well as building orientation, scale, massing, buffering, and setbacks that are appropriate with the context of the surrounding area.</p> <p><b>Policy 10.18: Reduce the visual impact of automobile parking facilities.</b></p> <p>10.18.3 Locate parking lots to the rear or interior of the site.</p> <p>10.18.18 Encourage appropriate land uses to share parking lots to reduce the size and visual impact of parking facilities.</p>

	ground. Existing surface lots should be eventually redeveloped and intensified.	
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## **Public Comments**

Public comments received to date are included as attachments in the report. To allow for proper analysis and incorporation of comments into the plan, staff is requesting additional time for the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood to work with staff to incorporate

## **RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING DIVISION:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission **continue** the consideration of the *15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan* document to the February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009, City Planning Commission public hearing.

Attachments:

- CPED Planning Division comments
- Public Works Comments
- Public Comments received to date
- 15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan available online at [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/marcy\\_holmes\\_15th\\_ave\\_plan.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/marcy_holmes_15th_ave_plan.asp) (The final plan will be attached to an updated staff report for the February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008, meeting of the City Planning Commission)

## Comments from CPED staff to the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood regarding the 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SE Urban Design Plan – January 13, 2009

- Page 2 – Consider striking “Unlike many Minneapolis neighborhoods” from first line of third paragraph.
- Page 6 – The Bierman Apartments are on Block 2, not Block 4.
- Page 11, Step 2 – The recommended set backs along 15<sup>th</sup> Ave when measured from the sidewalk are less than what are required in the residence and office residence zoning districts. To be more consistent with the zoning code, the 15 foot set back recommendation should be from the property line.
- Page 12, second bullet – It would be helpful if specific properties or buildings that are considered “architecturally significant and contributing buildings” are identified in a list or on a map.
- Page 13 – Be aware that according to the PW Street Ordinance, the right-of-way width between the curb line and the adjacent property on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE north of 8<sup>th</sup> Street SE is only 6.5 feet. With the railroad bridge and steep grade change adjacent to the area (especially problematic in Block 4), it doesn’t look feasible to fit the desired streetscape in the public right of way. Acknowledging these limitations is important, and calling for only a wider sidewalk at 8-10 feet might be a workable alternative.
- Page 13, bullets 5 and 6 – The zoning ordinance does not require obstructions in required yards. This recommendation could be rephrased to say: “For new buildings, provide raised patios that that add activity and open space adjacent to the promenade.” and “Provide balconies and occupiable step-back decks to incorporate additional open space along the promenade.”
- Page 15 – It may be worth while mentioning the importance of designing these semi public spaces with crime prevention through environmental design principles in mind.
- Page 16 and Page 8 – The Block 1 commercial street frontage recommendation on page 16 shows non-residential entries as appropriate along 14<sup>th</sup> Ave SE from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Street SE. However, the map on page 8 indicates that commercial uses shouldn’t extend beyond mid-block. Clarification should be provided.
- Page 17 – The following statement is somewhat vague and could be interpreted to contradict other adopted policies that discourage providing excess parking: “In order to reduce on-street parking demand throughout the neighborhood, each development should have enough parking to accommodate its users.” This could be a good place to reiterate the Marcy Holmes plan recommendation that 0.5 spaces per bedroom be provided for residential uses – if this is what is desired. Also, methods to reduce dependence on automobile reliance, such as one bicycle space per dwelling unit (which exceeds the new zoning code requirement), could be mentioned. Either way, the statement needs some clarification.
- Page 17 – Clarify what is meant by: “Structured parking with a liner building is allowed on the block face nearest Dinkytown.” Does this mean that a parking structure could front 5<sup>th</sup> St as long as it is designed to look like a building or is the recommendation to provide liner uses?
- Page 25 – The development model example on this page indicates that the project pictured included “renovating existing building as part of larger development.” While the value stated in the caption is perfectly appropriate, the Skyscape development pictured did not include renovation of an existing building.
- General – The numbering seems to be off at the beginning of the document, there are two page 2s.

**From:** Pflaum, Donald C.  
**Sent:** Thu 1/22/2009 11:49 AM  
**To:** Bernard, Joseph A.  
**Subject:** Marcy Holmes - 15th Ave SE Urban Design Plan

Joe,

Thanks for sending this over. I have been asked to look at this on behalf of Public Works.

I have reviewed the document and have concluded that it is a reasonable plan and makes sense. However, intensifying the land uses along the west side of 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SE along the four proposed blocks from 5<sup>th</sup> St SE to the BNSF corridor will create some challenges.

Below is a list of comments, concerns, and opportunities:

- Parking – The report does a good job of mentioning the need for better parking management in the area and proposes that new parking be created on-site in below grade ramps. When density goes up so does parking demand. It is critical that any new development in this area does not make the parking situation worse in this area and this plan may present an opportunity to alleviate some of the existing parking demand.
- Access Management – The report mentions that access points should be limited to one per block with no access onto 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. This is consistent with city policies to maintain the character of the grid system.
- Pedestrian and Bicycle – The report suggests the need for additional streetscape and plantings along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE is a newly reconstructed roadway and care should be taken to maintain the pavement surface. The pedestrian improvements seem pretty aggressive given the limited space. It would be good to clarify if some of the pedestrian improvements could be placed on private property with the buildings setback.
- City Utilities – It is unclear at this point what impact more intense development will have on the existing water and sewer systems. Developers will need to coordinate with Public Works to determine any needed upgrades to water mains and sanitary sewer pipes. Stormwater management must also be considered.
- Traffic Impacts – The proposed development could have a negative impact on traffic movement in this area. A TDM plan may be required to mitigate LOS reductions at nearby intersections and to determine if new infrastructure is needed in this area.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this plan.

-Don

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**From:** Green, Daniel J. [DGreen@millerdunwiddie.com]  
**Sent:** Mon 1/12/2009 5:33 PM  
**To:** Bernard, Joseph A.  
**Subject:** 15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan

Mr. Bernard,

This is an exciting plan with one large component of high-quality development missing – sustainability. The public realm improvements and high quality architecture should strive to reduce or eliminate carbon impacts within the project and even for the greater neighborhood. Many images illustrated in the document are drawn from Portland Oregon. A key component of their success is the encouragement and even mandate of sustainability targets within all projects. As an example, the Lloyd Crossing Sustainable Urban Design Plan illustrates strategies that should be explored in every redevelopment master-plan within the City of Minneapolis.

Regards,

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**From:** Stephen Gross [mrstevgross@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sat 1/10/2009 12:10 AM  
**To:** Bernard, Joseph A.  
**Subject:** Thoughts on 15th Avenue SE Urban Design Plan

\* I strongly support the idea of a unified 15th ave with a clear sense of continuous identity along its path.

\* I like the idea of "gateway" points for 15th ave; we particularly need such a point at the north end. When you cross southbound under the railroad tracks, there is no clear indicator that you have entered a new neighborhood. This could be a great way to better convey the identity of the neighborhood.

\* It's not clear to me what the standard of "high" rise is. Is there a definition for this?

\* I see that there will be a large pedestrian promenade. I recommend strong attention to having high-quality, night-time lighting of the promenade. This is a great idea, but we have to be realistic about street crime in the university area. A huge amount of late-night muggings occur in part because of poorly-lit streets. We can solve this (partially) up-front by including lighting in the design.

\* What methods will be used to encourage lot-aggregation?

\* It may be difficult to require balconies in street-facing buildings. Balconies are not particularly economical in this area, since they are only usable a few months out of the year. They look nice, but aren't practical. Developers won't be happy.

\* Courtyards are a great idea! I wish they were used more often. I'm glad to see they're included in this proposal.

\* I am very pleased to see that the proposal discourages street-level parking that would be visible from the street. This is a key aspect of urban development: cars should NOT be the highest priority!

\* Has anyone thought about how train noise will transmit to people living high-up in the proposed high rises?

Thanks for all your work,  
Looking forward to seeing this in action,  
--Steve

Stephen Gross  
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