

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

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Development Principles for University Avenue

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Midway Development Collaborative

The Midway Development Collaborative created these Development Principles for University Avenue. Groups that participated in the Midway Development Collaborative included: University UNITED, the Midway Chamber of Commerce, the Snelling Hamline Community Council, the Lexington Hamline Community Council, the Merriam Park Community Council, the Hamline Midway Coalition, the Aurora St. Anthony Community Development Corporation, District 7 Planning Council, the St. Anthony Park Community Council, Frogtown Action Alliance and District 8 Planning Council and the City of St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development.

Purposes

These development principles have been developed to guide future investment in the University Avenue corridor. The intent is for the guidelines to begin articulating a positive vision that encourages public and private investment in the area. Design of development projects will be reviewed with regard to its impacts in terms of scale, design, aesthetic factors and economic impact on surrounding businesses. Themes and features of interest for new development that are important to the business and residential communities are reflected in the principles. The principles also identify key redevelopment challenges that could benefit from creative public sector involvement. The development principles should be used to encourage public as well as private investment.

University Avenue adjoins residential neighborhoods for most of its length. One premise of these development principles is that the future of the commercial and residential areas are interdependent. All of the avenue responds to the character of surrounding neighborhoods and certain focal points along the avenue are or should become centers for community life. While these guidelines do not replace city ordinances and standards they do seek to balance short-term market realities and a long-term vision for whole urban communities. These guidelines are an advisory supplement to city ordinances and standards and should be referred to in any site plan review process. Developers are encouraged to utilize these principles for comprehensive planning for specific site development projects.

Having development principles for the avenue and its different segments will help to ensure that

each individual investment reinforces other investments in the commercial and residential areas and improves the quality of life and commerce. The Collaborative believes that development principles will serve as guidelines to promote high quality design and construction. It is intended that the appropriate city staff will make potential developers aware of these guidelines. This shared set of development principles for the avenue will facilitate a smoother neighborhood and business review process of individual projects.

These guidelines do not replace city ordinances and standards that apply to all development projects, most of which are enforced through the site plan review process. These guidelines are an advisory supplement to city ordinances and standards.

Previous Planning

The Midway Planning Collaborative has reviewed previous plans for University Avenue and neighborhoods along it, including the following:

1. University Avenue Corridor Study (1988)
2. South Saint Anthony Park Plan (1992)
3. Lexington-Hamline Plan (1993)
4. Thomas-Dale Plan (1997)
5. Hamline-Midway District Plan (1979)
6. Design for Public Safety (a citywide plan with special relevancy, 1993)

The Collaborative has drawn from all of these plans and thanks the citizens and organizations that developed them.

A. Principles for the Entire Length of the Avenue

1. Commercial and residential parking needs must be managed to avoid conflict. Shared use lots should be developed where possible. Parking serving the commercial corridor must be adequately buffered where it adjoins residential property through landscaping, fencing, etc. Where space for commercial parking is not available, residents and businesses should work with the City to develop mutually beneficial alternatives.
2. Alleys are often significant buffers between residential and commercial uses and should be maintained as such. Attractive walls, fencing and landscaping should help further define these buffers.
3. Some portions of University Avenue are appropriate for housing and commercial/residential development. For example housing of light or moderate density would be appropriate around University and Raymond, University and Fairview,

University and Dale, and University and Snelling.

4. Buildings should be oriented to University Avenue and aligned with the street where consistent with use, lot size and configuration to support the goal of an urban and aesthetically pleasing street scape. Buildings should be close to the sidewalk where appropriate and consistent with surrounding development. Open space with abundant greenery and trees between building facades and the sidewalk are allowed where appropriate and consistent with surrounding development. Canopies and other facade articulation can also address the goal of having an aesthetically pleasing street scape without requiring that buildings be placed at the sidewalk. Modulation of building massing and open spaces can create interest along the avenue.
5. Transportation modes should be integrated and balanced. The three predominant modes are cars, buses, and walking with an increasing presence of biking. These transportation modes should all function safely and conveniently along the entire length of the avenue. Design of projects should incorporate pedestrian walkways, bike access routes and bike racks in accessible, secure and clearly identifiable areas and there should be clear striping of wheelchair access points.
6. University Avenue should continue to be a primary public transit corridor in the Twin Cities region. Bus shelters and transit access points should be integrated as a part of site plan development for projects and should be clearly demarcated with appropriate signage. Public transit service should be improved including shelters and rider access points. Planning for development should include assessment of transit needs, traffic volume, speed, flow and parking requirements.
7. Buildings on University Avenue should have attractive pedestrian connections to the avenue. Office development and new housing types should be located along the corridor.
8. Landscaping in public right of way should be created and sustained along the corridor and should reflect the different characters of various segments of the avenue as well as embrace bio-diversity. An assessment district to support this type of landscaping and to handle on-going maintenance on the avenue should be explored.
9. Developers are encouraged to provide more than the minimal amount of landscaping required by code. Green space is of special significance in community shopping areas with pedestrian nodes.
10. Public safety is critical to the success of the avenue. The *Design for Public Safety* principles should be followed. The Police Department should be asked for comments on site plans for development projects.

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11. The avenue must continue to meet air quality standards and other environmental standards.
12. Architecturally attractive buildings should be renovated and redeveloped whenever possible. New construction projects should be designed to fit within the surrounding urban context and complement adjacent properties.
13. Parking lots should be designed to be well lighted and where they border residential properties lot lighting should not negatively impact the residential areas.
14. Signage will conform to minimum zoning regulations and should be attractive and complementary to the character of the street. Signage should clearly mark where parking is available and where bus stops and pedestrian pathways are located.
15. University Avenue has different characteristics from east to west. Development and public investment should be encouraged to build on the character of the Avenue at different points through building and street scape design. For example: celebrating the South East Asian business community at the east end and the arts district on the west end. Each segment should evoke a different urban flavor or a unique sense of place that reflects the neighborhood and populations that live and work there. As a starting proposal, the segments could be:
 - Capitol Approach east of Marion
 - Three community commercial strip segments in areas: from Marion to Lexington, from Lexington to Snelling on the north side, and from Snelling to Prior. Within these community commercial strips, there are three different urban design types:
 - (a) Neighborhood shopping nodes at selected locations;
 - (b) A predominantly office district from Health East (former Midway Hospital) to Prior;
 - (c) General commercial districts that fill the stretches between the two previous urban design types.
 - Regional shopping district from Lexington to Snelling on the south side
 - Industrial district from Prior to Carleton
 - Midtown urban (warehouse) village around Raymond
 - Westgate Office Park
Highway 280 -Transfer Road

See map. The development principles in the sections below correspond to each of the segments of the avenue.

16. It is desirable that vacant and blighted buildings along University Avenue be redeveloped in keeping with market forces to prevent an appearance of neglect and deterioration as

well as to preserve jobs and property tax base. Vacant lots awaiting redevelopment should be maintained to prevent an appearance of neglect.

17. To ensure that University Avenue is as pedestrian friendly as possible, developments should minimize or reduce curb cuts where possible and shared curb cuts for adjacent parking areas should be encouraged. Where alleys are the suggested method of ingress and egress to commercial parking, adjacent property owners must agree to this use and must work with the businesses to ensure alley use is feasible and fair to all. Where existing alleys serve as a point of access to parking lots, signage should be used to control speeds and agreements between residents and businesses about maintenance and use of the alley should be encouraged.

B. Principles for the Capitol Approach

1. Buildings should have a scale and quality similar to what the Capitol Area Architecture and Planning Board has approved north of the capitol.
2. The street scape should be well-planted and have a civic, semi-monumental quality.
3. Offices should be the primary land use on University Avenue; Rice Street has more potential as community retail; mixed use buildings with a residential component are encouraged.

C. Principles for Neighborhood Shopping Nodes

1. Commercial land uses should be integrated with surrounding housing, making a whole and continuous neighborhood environment. Land use transitions should be addressed via buffers, mixed use projects, placing parking behind buildings or to the side of buildings, creating higher density housing on the Avenue, etc. Design of projects should be pedestrian friendly.
2. Each pedestrian-oriented neighborhood shopping node should be concentrated, preferably no more than two blocks long, with concentrated retail and service businesses.
3. Buildings should be built up close to the sidewalk unless there is a demonstrated pedestrian design amenity such as abundant greenery and trees. Canopies and other facade articulation can also address the goal of having an aesthetically pleasing street scape.
4. It is important at intersections for buildings to “hold the corner,” that is, to be located out near the sidewalk of both streets.

5. Multi-story and mixed use buildings are strongly encouraged, with building height and mass compatible with adjacent commercial and residential areas.
6. Buildings need to have windows onto the street and toward parking lots so that people can see in and out of retail and service businesses. As a guideline, at least 40 percent of the front facade of new or reconstructed buildings should be devoted to windows and doors.
7. Parking lots should be to the side or wrapped around the rear of buildings and need to be landscaped wherever possible. Shared use of parking is strongly encouraged to reduce the amount of asphalt and curb cuts. Where the location of parking on the rear of commercial areas is adjacent to residential properties, alternatives such as parking to the side or in front may have to be evaluated.
8. Customer parking areas need to be clearly identified with simple signage. When possible free or voucher parking should be identified with good signage to help prevent encroachment of commercial parking into residential areas.
9. The sidewalk areas should have design features that produce a pedestrian scale: relatively small business frontages, awnings, decorative street lights, trees (but avoid blocking signage), street furniture, sidewalk or patio cafes.
10. New construction and addition projects should be brick, brick face, stucco, its equivalent or better.

D. Principles for General Commercial Areas Along Community Commercial Strips

1. Large-scale or auto-oriented businesses should be separated from adjoining residential property by walls, fences, distance and landscaping.
2. Given the mixture of building setbacks on these blocks, site planning with consideration for adjoining properties along the avenue is important to avoid a chaotic appearance.
3. Buildings should have windows on the street even if they are set back from the sidewalk.
4. To the maximum extent possible, parking lots should be located beside and/or behind buildings. Parking lots in front of buildings should be limited when possible to two rows of parking.
5. Parking lots need to be defined by landscaping and separated from the sidewalk by shrubs, wall, and/or fencing. The parking lots should be set back from the sidewalk at

least 6 feet so that trees can grow well in the space or shrubs can be massed.

6. Buildings should have masonry exteriors, preferably of brick, or of decorative block, its equivalent or better.

E. Principles for the Regional Shopping District

1. “Big Box” stores are appropriate and should be designed in an urban style (in terms of building mass, scale, lot configuration, visual presence on the street and pedestrian access and safety). These developments should present an accessible and inviting visual impact on University Avenue and adjacent streets through the utilization of well-designed entry doors, windows, facade colors and building materials, wall definitions and architectural articulation. Entry doors must relate to the placement of parking as well as the location of the street and should be convenient for pedestrian customers and transit customers, as well as automobile customers.
2. Parking lots must be adequate (generally 5 parking spaces per 1,000 gross sq. ft. of retail). For buildings that front on commercial avenues, no more than 40% of the parking should be located between the building and the commercial avenue, with the remainder (60%) located on the other sides of the building. Where possible parking ramps that are architecturally pleasing and fit to the scale of the surrounding development should be explored as an alternative to large, spread out parking lots that dominate the site.
3. Parking lots should be developed to provide safe, well-lit, attractive clearly marked pedestrian friendly pathways between separate buildings, developments and streets.
4. Trees, shrubs, low walls, decorative metal fencing and decorative lighting should define the avenue’s sidewalk edge and should break up large parking lots into more human-scaled spaces. Green landscaped area should total 15 percent of the non-built area. Plazas and sidewalks with decorative surfacing and artistic features may be considered as partial fulfillment of this requirement when appropriate. The use of native landscape, where appropriate, is encouraged.

The site’s perimeter should have a setback of at least 12 feet with the equivalent of a tree planted for every twenty-five feet. Clumping of trees may be considered. The perimeter of all parking areas should be visually screened with a 2.5 feet high hedge and/or decorative metal 3 feet high fence and grass extending from the hedge/fence to the sidewalk.

Within the parking lot, one tree should be provided for every twenty-five parking spaces.

An island that is at least 9' by 18' (the size of a parking space) shall be provided for each tree. Grouping of trees within the parking lot is recommended where possible to facilitate irrigation and health of trees.

An irrigation system should be provided; the preferred system is an underground, automated irrigation system. The planting specifications need to indicate sufficient black dirt to support future growth of trees. It is recommended that soil be three feet deep with 135 sq. ft. of permeable surface area to support each tree. New trees should be a minimum of 2.5" in diameter. [Note: ornamental trees do not meet the requirement.]

5. Exterior building materials should be brick, decorative, block, stucco, its equivalent or better.
6. Lexington Parkway frontages must provide landscaping suitable for the parkway.

F. Principles for Office Districts

1. Expansion of office space is strongly encouraged.
2. Office clusters will likely have larger and taller buildings with larger parking lots than most sections of the avenue, but the buildings should still be related to the avenue with most of the parking to the rear. If feasible, underground or ramped parking are preferred. Parking lots that front on the avenue or that adjoin residential areas should be especially well landscaped.
3. Building height and mass should be compatible with adjacent commercial and residential areas.
4. Commercial land uses should be intermixed with office clusters so that employees can walk to restaurants and other convenience businesses.
5. Office clusters should have a fairly high level of pedestrian amenity to encourage walking to nearby services and riding transit to work.
6. Exterior building materials should be of brick, its equivalent or better. Buildings should have windows facing the avenue.

G. Principles for Industrial Districts

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1. Streets and the size of development parcels need to be sized for industrial activity and truck maneuvering.
2. Designing for public safety is important.
3. Buildings that front on the avenue should have windows facing the street and be made of masonry construction, preferably with brick facades, or of decorative block, its equivalent, or better.
4. Although the avenue will not have a pedestrian character in industrial districts, a basic level of pedestrian accessibility must be provided--sidewalks along streets, safe bus stops, and some of the landscaping and amenity of newer industrial parks.
5. Where industry borders on residential property, the edge of the industrial property should be landscaped and well-kept.

H. Principles for the Midtown Urban Village

1. Mixed use with significant residential use of property and development of potential office uses is strongly encouraged.
2. Historic preservation and retaining a historic design character are key factors for marketing the area.
3. Arts organizations and artists' lofts and related businesses are a market focus for Raymond-University.
4. Development of parking to permit highest and best use of properties and increased job development is a high priority for this area.
5. (Otherwise the same as Neighborhood Shopping Nodes above.)

I. Westgate Office Park

1. Maintain character of the recent redevelopment.

Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development contact:

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