

Area Plan Summary

Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

Amended and adopted by the Planning Commission – December 2, 2005

Amended and adopted by the City Council - February 15, 2006

*This summary appends to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the **Summit Hill / District 16 Neighborhood Plan** and replaces the District 16 Plan adopted in 1989. The **Summit Hill / District 16 Neighborhood Plan** consists of five major areas of focus, including (1) Grand Avenue Mixed Use Corridor, (2) Housing and Residential Life, (3) Community Life, Public Spaces, and Recreation, (4) Pedestrian Safety, Traffic, and Parking, and (5) Crime Prevention and Safety.*

Copies of the full-length plan are available for review at the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and the offices of the Summit Hill Association/District 16 Planning Council.

Location

The Summit Hill neighborhood is an approximately 75 square block neighborhood in the City of St. Paul, bounded by Summit Avenue on the north, Interstate 35E on the south and east, and Ayd Mill Road on the west.



Summit Hill Neighborhood in Saint Paul

Vision

The Summit Hill neighborhood maintains and reinforces Grand Avenue as an eclectic mix and balance of housing, and small-scale shops, restaurants, and services, both locally and nationally owned, for residents and visitors. Grand Avenue shall continue to be a mix of buildings that respect the historic character of the avenue and neighborhood and that relate closely to the sidewalk and encourage pedestrian activity at the street level. Beautification efforts on Grand Avenue continue with attention to trees, planters, bench gardens, and historical lighting. Businesses provide parking that is affordable, inconspicuous, attractive, and underground when appropriate.

Preserve the pedestrian-friendly, historic residential and commercial character of the Summit Hill neighborhood by providing a healthy balance of transportation options. Address persistent traffic and parking problems in the neighborhood to significantly reduce commercial spillover to residential streets, greatly enhance pedestrian safety through traffic calming and enforcement, and reduce the parking deficit.

Summit Hill will continue to be a safe neighborhood with good quality police and fire protection. Personal safety will be reinforced through Summit Hill's physical and social networks operating within the neighborhood and along Grand Avenue, with a high level of maintenance of spaces and buildings that create a perception and feeling of safety and belonging.

Specific Strategies

The following are strategies that are new initiatives for the City of Saint Paul. The full list of strategies for the Summit Hill Association and other neighborhood partners can be found in the full-length plan.

Grand Avenue Mixed Use Corridor

G1 Corridor Continuity. Maintain Grand Avenue as a continuous neighborhood retail and residential corridor and contain commercial uses and accessory parking within existing boundaries.

G2 Streetscape Enhancement Plan. Develop a Grand Avenue Streetscape Enhancement Plan to make Grand Avenue more pedestrian-, shopper-, and bicycle-friendly, to enhance its aesthetic qualities, and to invigorate its public realm, including Grand Avenue between Oakland Street and I-35E.

G3 Design Standards. Adopt TN2 design standards for East Grand in an overlay district. These design standards reinforce human-scale building characteristics, promote quality in architectural materials, reinforce a pedestrian-focused streetscape, promote underground parking for mixed use developments, and visually-screened surface parking for smaller, single-use developments, and promote signage that is consistent with building architecture and business function, and complements the eclectic nature of the avenue.

G4 Commercial and Housing Mix. Retain BC (commercial uses in residential structures) and residential zoning on Grand Avenue. Discourage rezoning of residential uses on Grand Avenue to more intensive uses.

G5 Neighborhood Focus for Commercial Uses. B2 and BC zoning allows uses most appropriate to commercial activity on Grand Avenue. Additional B3 uses are not appropriate for Grand Avenue. A zoning study should be initiated by the City to rezone B3 parcels that are currently used for B2 or less intensive uses.

G6 Commercial Spillover. Rezoning and variances are opposed by SHA in those areas where parking and traffic problems create undue hardship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors. To help reduce commercial spillover effects on nearby property owners, the approval of site plans and licenses will include efforts to mitigate parking and traffic problems that are of serious concern to immediately affected businesses and residents.

G7 Locally-Owned Businesses. SHA recommends implementing mechanisms for supporting and retaining small, locally-owned businesses. Such mechanisms may include, for example, the adoption of standards to limit the number of formula business establishments on East Grand Avenue, campaigns by the community to promote small businesses, or an assessment district to subsidize small, independent businesses. The City will conduct a study on where and how to support independent businesses, which may result in changes to code or procedures.

G8 Development Opportunities. Create a committee including representatives from the Summit Hill Association and GABA to identify these opportunities and outline the types of businesses or mix of uses that might best be accommodated at those locations, and describe the appropriate scale and design.

G9 Signs. Rigorously enforce the Grand Avenue Sign Guidelines. SHA should assist LIEP in keeping an up-to-date inventory of existing non-conforming signs.

G10 Scale and Height Limits. Adopt limitations of the height and scale on new buildings on East Grand Avenue in an overlay district, as follows:

1. Limit new buildings to a footprint of 25,000 square feet or less.
2. Limit new building total size, above ground, to 75,000 square feet or less, including parking
3. Limit building height to three (3) stories, or to thirty feet (30') for commercial projects and to thirty-six feet (36') for mixed commercial and residential projects, whichever is lower. No additional height will be allowed, even with setbacks.
4. Work with the City to adopt the desired limitations for East Grand Avenue.

Housing and Residential Life

H1 Property Maintenance and Beautification. SHA will develop and implement a district-wide

program to educate and encourage residents to better maintain their properties, as well as their alleys, with regard to trash receptacles, planting and weed removal.

H2 Historic Preservation. In collaboration with the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, consider a historic site survey of properties south of Grand Avenue and explore the feasibility of expanding the Hill Historic District, designating a new district or nominating additional individual sites.

H3 Design Guidelines. Summit Hill Association will coordinate a volunteer group to develop and implement voluntary design guidelines for new housing and the renovation of existing housing in areas not included in the historic district. The guidelines should encourage high quality design that emphasizes being complementary and contextual rather than strict historic replication. Provide design guidelines and historic preservation goals to persons receiving demolition permits and ensure that replacement housing meets all pertinent zoning requirements, recognizing that pre-existing non-conforming conditions are protected by state law.

H6 Open Spaces. Advocate for retention of neighborhood green spaces, such as parks and vegetated bluff areas. SHA will explore incentives for property owners to preserve as private open space the undeveloped portions of properties.

H7 Housing Density. Ensure that the impact of any increased density conforms to zoning and building requirements, and that the City considers the development's adverse impact on existing municipal services including, but not limited to, traffic and parking.

H8 Single-family and Multi-family Residences. Maintain the existing residentially zoned area and retain the mix of housing types (single-family, duplex, townhouses, and apartments) in the Summit Hill neighborhood in existing and new housing developments. Request the City to conduct a zoning study to rezone apartments and condos to the existing use.

H9 Mixed-Use Buildings (Commercial Plus Residential). Ensure that new and renovated mixed-use buildings on Grand Avenue respect the historic nature and character of the neighborhood, as well as providing dedicated off-street or underground parking for residents and tenants.

H10 Housing-related Parking. Encourage residents to fully utilize existing residential parking opportunities in the neighborhood and to create new off-street parking or garages when possible.

1. Work with the City of St. Paul to enforce ordinances regarding parking in alleys and inappropriate or excessive parking on individual properties.

H12 Housing Options. Maintain rental housing options to continue some measure of affordability in the neighborhood.

Community Life, Public Spaces, and Recreation

The Summit Hill Plan calls for recruiting and maintaining block leaders, encouraging volunteerism, reaching out to all residents about community events, continuing community events such as the “Progressive Supper” and “Summit Hill House Tour,” supporting the Grand Avenue Business Association on “Grand Old Day” and “The Grand Meander,” using community assets such as institutions and churches, and supporting local cultural opportunities and the arts.

CL1 Linwood Recreation Center. Support Linwood Recreation Center programs for all ages, including sports, community education, arts, and group activities.

CL8 Tree Program. Develop a District boulevard tree preservation and replacement plan that seeks to maintain and preserve our valued large trees and provide planting guidelines for new trees in both urban and residential streetscapes. The vegetated bluff areas that buffer District 16 from I-35 and Ayd Mill Road should be preserved, except for prairie bluff restorations.

CL9 Gateway and Image Plan. Develop a Summit Hill/District 16 identification plan through the use of urban design techniques including use of banners/graphics and/or historically sensitive signage placed on the streetscape that identifies that one is in the Summit Hill neighborhood.

CL10 Greening the Public Realm. Beautify the public realm throughout the neighborhood to promote increased use and better stewardship.

1. Seek out opportunities to incorporate bench gardens in existing parks and in new or redeveloped retail or residential spaces on Grand Avenue.
2. Enhance maintenance of public and private bluff areas by working with residents and the City park staff to remove litter, stabilize slopes, repair retaining walls, and remove buckthorn.

CL11 Linwood Park. Enhance maintenance of Linwood Park and develop a landscape design plan for upper Linwood Park.

CL12 Ayd Mill Road. Support the installation of off-road pedestrian and bicycle paths adjacent to any redesign of Ayd Mill Road.

Pedestrian Safety, Traffic, and Parking

P1 Comprehensive Traffic and Parking Study. Initiate, in cooperation with the City, a thorough, comprehensive traffic and parking study of the neighborhood to determine an appropriate transportation and parking management strategy. Public Works will participate in this process as staff resources and time permits.

P2 Specific Safety Measures. Improve pedestrian safety and improve the quality of the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.

1. Make selected crosswalks on arterials (Grand, Summit, Lexington, St. Clair, Victoria) more visible through a combination of bolder color, striping, texture and/or signage. Encourage the City Police to vigorously enforce laws concerning crosswalks, speed limits, and restricted parking near intersections.
2. SHA recommends the elimination of right turns on red at certain intersections along Summit and Grand avenues to improve pedestrian safety.
3. Emphasize parking restrictions near intersections using signs and yellow paint to clearly indicate no parking. Public Works will install signs on a case-by-case basis.
4. Install signs, plantings, and other signals at neighborhood gateways that announce “Welcome to the Historic Summit Hill Neighborhood,” “Slow Down and Stop for Pedestrians in Crosswalks,” “20 is Plenty,” and “Slow for Children.”
5. Summit Hill Association will work with the City, businesses, and developers to install more bicycle racks, benches, and bus shelters.

P3 Traffic-Calming. Utilize traffic calming techniques that include education, enforcement, and engineering resources. Traffic calming includes street design and regulatory features that cause motorists to drive more slowly and with a greater degree of attentiveness.

1. Encourage the City to rigorously enforce speed limits.
2. Increase driver awareness of speed limits by placing speed monitoring display devices on neighborhood streets.
3. Explore and implement with community and City support specific traffic-calming measures such as, speed humps, traffic circles, bump outs, center medians and additional stop signs. Make traffic calming a part of all street reconstruction.
4. SHA will seek to reduce speed limits on residential streets to 25 miles per hour.
5. Retain I-35E at the edge of Summit Hill as a 45-mile per hour parkway and encourage the Minnesota Department of Transportation to maintain its attractive landscaping in the medians and along the roadway.

P4 Traffic Management. Manage traffic flow and street capacity to discourage increased volumes and speeds, provide safe and convenient access to properties, and protect pedestrians.

1. Provide better enforcement of traffic and parking laws. Encourage towing of violators. Restrict parking within 30 feet of intersections, and within 5 feet of alleys and driveways, to ensure visibility.
2. Assess the feasibility of additional traffic controls, such as traffic lights and stop signs.
3. Parking and vehicle access to and from future development on Grand Avenue shall be sensitive to traffic flow, parking needs, and pedestrian safety.
4. Maintain Summit and St. Clair Avenues, and Dale and Victoria Streets, as 2-lane streets, Grand Avenue as a 3-lane street, and Lexington Parkway as a 3-lane street south of Grand, not to be widened to accommodate increased traffic.

P5 Transit. Promote transit use, recapture ridership, and serve the transit-dependent by

matching transit service with travel need.

1. Maintain and enhance transit service on Grand and St. Clair Avenues.
2. SHA encourages maintenance of existing transit shelters, installation of new ones when possible, and the elimination or reduction of advertising signs on bus benches and shelters. Summit Hill Association does not want private advertising shelters.
3. Install route maps and schedules at more transit stops.
4. Encourage the Grand Avenue Business Association and other businesses to adopt a merchant-supported token system to encourage transit use.
5. Explore additional transit options to cost-effectively increase transit frequency and ridership and to minimize car use and traffic, such as a trolley for Grand Avenue or by interlining the Grand Avenue transit route with a Minneapolis route so that it meets demand for service to the University of Minnesota, University of St. Thomas, and downtown Minneapolis.

P6 Off-street Parking. Adequate off-street parking shall be provided for all residential and commercial uses, in a manner that respects the historic character of the neighborhood.

1. Screen parking lots using appropriate treatments such as a strong landscaped edge along the street and alley.
2. Work with the Police Department to develop a plan to dramatically increase enforcement of all existing parking ordinances. Review parking variance history and City parking policies to determine if a revised regulatory approach is required.
3. SHA encourages and supports underground parking where appropriate.
4. SHA recommends that rooftop parking is adequately screened by parapets, such that they prevent visibility to nearby residences from the rooftop parking area.
5. Restrict commercial parking lots from areas that are used primarily for residential purposes.
6. Implement more uniform parking zones on Grand Avenue to facilitate more rigorous enforcement.
7. Continue the option of Permit Parking zones for those residents who request them.

P7 Shared Parking. Facilitate shared parking agreements. Allow and encourage shared parking in institutional lots. The Summit Hill Association, the Grand Avenue Business Association, and the City shall work with property owners to reach parking agreements for shared use of commercial parking as allowed under Statute 62.103 of the Zoning Code, and shared use of institutional lots as allowed under Statute 60.413(15) of the code. Shared parking options should be explored as part of any application for parking variance.

P8 Building Removal for Parking. Discourage building removal solely for parking.

P9 Parking Supply. Retain and expand existing commercial and residential parking.

1. The Summit Hill Association opposes removal of existing parking without substitute parking being provided at a level greater than or equal to current zoning requirements.

2. The Summit Hill Association opposes parking variances and wants all new residential and commercial buildings to provide parking at a level equal to or greater than the current zoning requirements at the time of permit application.
3. Eliminate the “Rule of Five” parking regulation from East Grand Avenue.

P10 Employee Parking. Find alternatives for employee parking where customer demand is highest.

P11 Customer Parking. Improve awareness of parking options for Grand Avenue customers and visitors.

Crime Prevention and Safety

The full Summit Hill Plan calls for continuing to support the Neighborhood Block Watch program, continuing to maintain close working relationships with police and fire departments, and advocating for mounted police, bicycle, and foot patrols.

CR1 Crime Watch Program. Promote, use, and expand the Neighborhood Crime Watch Program to organize and mobilize the neighborhood to pro-actively approach personal safety and property protection.

1. Continue to support the variety of compatible land uses and densities that characterize the “eyes on the street” safety of Summit Hill.
2. Evaluate street and alley lighting to determine if improvements are needed regarding lighting levels and distribution.
3. Pursue greater police patrols of Linwood Park and its slopes, particularly after dark, to discourage repeated problems with car break-ins, graffiti, vandalism, and more serious crimes.

Priority Actions for City Participation

The following actions have been identified as priorities of the community that require leadership or signification participation by city government. Community groups and city departments should implement the projects identified in this summary by applying for city resources in competitive processes such as the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and Sales Tax Revitalization program (STAR), and working though the regular operating programs of relevant city departments.

Planning and Economic Development

G3, G5, G10. Conduct a study for an overlay zoning district along East Grand Avenue.

G6. Explore mechanisms for supporting and retaining small, locally-owned businesses on East Grand Avenue, such as the adoption of standards to limit the number of formula business establishments on East Grand Avenue, campaigns by the community or an assessment district to subsidize small, independent businesses.

P5-5. Conduct a trolley study for Grand Avenue.

P8 Discourage the removal of historic or residential buildings solely to provide additional parking.

Public Works

G2. Participate in a streetscape enhancement plan if initiated by the community.

CL12. Ayd Mill Road. Support the installation of off-road pedestrian and bicycle paths adjacent to any redesign of Ayd Mill Road.

P1. Comprehensive Traffic and Parking Study. Participate in a traffic and parking study of the neighborhood to determine an appropriate transportation and parking management strategy.

P2-1 Make crosswalks more visible to improve pedestrian safety.

P2-3 Emphasize parking restrictions near intersections using signs to clearly indicate no parking.

P3-2 Increase driver awareness of speed limits by placing speed monitoring display devices on neighborhood streets.

P3-3 Explore and implement with community and City support specific traffic-calming measures such as, speed humps, traffic circles, bump outs, center medians and additional stop signs. Make traffic calming a part of all street reconstruction.

P4-4 Maintain Summit and St. Clair Avenues, and Dale and Victoria Streets, as 2-lane streets, Grand Avenue as a 3-lane street, and Lexington Parkway as a 3-lane street south of Grand, not to be widened to accommodate increase traffic.

P5-5. Conduct a trolley study for Grand Avenue.

P6-6 Implement more uniform parking zones on Grand Avenue to facilitate more rigorous enforcement.

Licensing, Inspection, and Environmental Protection

P2-5. Encourage more bicycle racks, benches, and bus shelters during site plan review when appropriate

P6-1. Screen parking lots using appropriate treatments and include a strong landscaped edge along the street and alley.

P6-2. Work with the community to develop a plan to dramatically increase enforcement of all existing parking ordinances provisions related to parking. Review parking variance history and City parking policies to determine if a revised regulatory approach is required.

P7-1 The Summit Hill Association, the Grand Avenue Business Association, and the City shall work with property owners to reach parking agreements for shared use of commercial parking as allowed under Statute 62.103 of the Zoning Code, and shared use of institutional lots as allowed under Statute 60.413(15) of the code. Shared parking options should be explored as part of any application for parking variance.

Parks and Recreation

CL1. Linwood Recreation Center. Support Linwood Recreation Center programs for all ages, including sports, community education, arts, and group activities.

CL10-2 Enhance maintenance of public bluff areas by working with residents to remove litter, stabilize slopes, repair retaining walls, and remove buckthorn.

CL11 Work with the community to enhance the maintenance of Linwood Park and develop a landscape design plan for upper Linwood Park.

Police Department

P2b. Vigorously enforce laws concerning existing crosswalks, speed limits, restricted parking near intersections, and other parking and traffic laws.

Planning Commission and City Council Review

The Planning Commission finds that the Area Plan Summary of the Summit Hill Plan, as proposed by the Summit Hill Association, is generally consistent with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and adopted City policies. The Planning Commission raised questions about an overlay district for East Grand Avenue and the elimination of the Rule of Five. However, the City Council adopted the Area Plan Summary as proposed by the Summit Hill Association.

Planning Process

In 2002, the Summit Hill Association/District 16 Planning Council decided to update its 1989 District 16 Plan. This 2004 Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan represents over a thousand hours of volunteer work by community members. The SHA/District 16 Planning Council designated a Steering Committee to work closely with City Officials, and the consultant team of Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH) and Sanders Wacker Bergly Inc. (SWB) in a collaborative program over 18 months. Several participation methods, including three community wide meetings, a neighborhood survey, a community video, community vision boards, a photo gallery, and a Grand Avenue Business Association focus group, were used to solicit and engage a broad and diverse cross-section of the community.