



CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the City Planning Commission

CPC Agenda Item #1
May 23, 2015

SMALL AREA PLAN SUMMARY

<i>Project Name:</i>	The Como Blueprint: A Small Area Plan for the Como Neighborhood of Minneapolis
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<i>Wards:</i>	1 and 2
<i>Neighborhood:</i>	Southeast Como Improvement Association
<i>Existing Land Use Features:</i>	<i>Growth Center:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• University of Minnesota <i>Industrial Employment Districts:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mid City Industrial• SEMI <i>Community Corridors:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15th Ave SE/Como Ave SE• Hennepin Ave E <i>Neighborhood Commercial Node:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Como Ave SE & 16th Ave SE
<i>Zoning Plate Numbers:</i>	15 & 16

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

The Southeast Como neighborhood is located within Minneapolis' University Community. The neighborhood's main boundaries are Hennepin Ave E and Winter St NE on the north, the Minneapolis boundary with St Paul on the east, and the BNSF rail line and SEMI rail yard on the south and west.

The central portion of the neighborhood is residential, with portions of two Industrial Employment Districts (Mid City and SEMI) on the northern and southern sides. The neighborhood is in close proximity to the University of Minnesota Growth Center, and the neighborhood has been impacted by this proximity in various ways explored in the plan. Two Community Corridors run east-west through Southeast Como: Hennepin Ave E and 15th Ave SE/Como Ave SE. Much of the neighborhood's mixed use development is located along these corridors, with the focal point being the Como Ave SE & 16th Ave SE Neighborhood Commercial Node.

This is the Southeast Como neighborhood's first small area plan. It was initiated and led by the Southeast Como Improvement Association (SECIA). The motivating factors for planning included: (1) addressing the impacts of recent growth and change, particularly in relationship to the University of Minnesota Growth Center; (2) a desire to accommodate growth and development appropriately while maintaining and enhancing community character, and (3) an effort to proactively further neighborhood goals around livability, environmental sustainability, and other key topics.

While there is no other small area plan that specifically covers Southeast Como, SECIA has also been involved with University area district-wide planning discussions and projects through the University District Alliance. SECIA also commissioned a separate housing study during the planning process, which is included as an appendix to the main plan and referenced in its recommendations.

Planning Process and Community Engagement

SECIA has led this planning effort since its origination in Fall 2012. Several individuals and firms have been brought on at times to assist with various parts of the project – including facilitating focus groups, staffing community meetings, and drafting content.

SECIA's Board of Directors assembled a representative and diverse steering committee to guide the planning process, which met on a monthly basis in meetings open to the public. The steering committee developed a robust community engagement process, including:

- Detailed community survey of neighborhood stakeholders
- Four large community-wide public meetings
- Series of seven focus group meetings:
 - Homeowners
 - Landlords, business owners
 - Seniors, bicyclists, park users, gardeners
 - Renters, gardeners, bicyclists, park users
 - Developers
 - Public agency staff, government employees, institution staff, elected leaders
 - Residents of Brook Commons and Charlotte Commons (affordable family housing)
- Attendance at community events, including the Como Annual Meeting, National Night Out, and the Como Cookout
- A “dotmocracy” exercise at the Como Annual Meeting to rank priorities
- Ongoing communication with the neighborhood as a whole through print and electronic media, including a regularly updated project website, flyers posted around the neighborhood and in businesses,

This planning process lasted around three years – from Fall 2012 to Fall 2015. The lengthy planning process reflected (1) the thoughtful, in-depth conversations that went into the development of the small area plan in an area facing rapid growth and change, and (2) the realities of a volunteer-led, modestly budgeted planning process.

Review and Approval Process

The draft plan was approved by SECIA for submittal to the City in Fall 2015. After City staff review and some subsequent edits, the plan moved forward for 45 day review. The 45-day public review period was held from January 8 until February 21, 2016. Public comments received during that period were compiled, and a response was provided for each one. Comments and responses are included here.

Comments from City staff and public review were brought to SECIA for consideration. The plan was amended to reflect these comments – as reflected in the version provided with this staff report.

The plan was subsequently brought to CPC COW on May 12, 2016 for review and discussion. No major changes were made subsequent to this meeting, though a few minor clarifications were added.

After review and action by the Minneapolis City Planning Commission on May 23, 2016, CPED intends to take the plan to the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council on June 23, 2016.

Pending full adoption of the plan by the CPC and Council, it will be submitted subsequently to the Metropolitan Council for amendment to the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* (the City's comprehensive plan).

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Como Blueprint starts with several sections of general information. The Executive Summary covers the main points of the plan, as well as summarizing previous plans that impact the neighborhood. The Vision Statement provides an overall direction for the plan. The Community Engagement describes in detail the robust public engagement strategy and main results. The History section covers neighborhood history. The Neighborhood Profile provides a statistical overview of the neighborhood.

The Como Blueprint policy direction is divided into chapters, organized to be largely consistent with the sections of the City's comprehensive plan. The main recommendations from each chapter are summarized below.

Land Use

The recommendations within the Land Use section are designed to protect core low density residential areas of the neighborhood and support mixed-use and medium density residential development in designated locations. The vast majority of land use in the Como neighborhood will remain unchanged. Areas of potential change include Transitional Industrial land and along the neighborhood's Community Corridors – East Hennepin Ave, and portions of Como Ave SE and 15th Ave SE. Specific recommendations include:

- Support mixed-use and medium density residential development in Transitional Industrial areas and along the neighborhood's Community Corridors.
- Evaluate the existing land use along the neighborhood's Community Corridors.
- Develop a framework addressing the differences between East Hennepin Ave, Como Ave, and 15th Ave SE.
- Identify desired development styles, including mixed-use and medium density housing.
- Consider aggregation of lots along Community Corridors to facilitate the development of mixed-use buildings and medium density housing.
- Consider reorienting lots along Community Corridors to face the main thoroughfare.
- Encourage fine-grained street pattern if industrial land is redeveloped.
- Promote and pursue the land trust ownership model.

Transportation

The recommendations within the Transportation section focus on evaluating and improving the network, especially for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Long-term design and development policies that support pedestrians and transit use are also recommended. Specific recommendations include:

- Evaluate the pedestrian infrastructure, identify network gaps and needs, and determine the feasibility of pedestrian infrastructure improvements.
- Evaluate neighborhood parking conditions.
- Install additional limited parking signs near transit stops and Tuttle School.
- Assess the existing bicycle infrastructure, and evaluate potential bicycle infrastructure improvements.
- Review the bicycle policies that impact the Como neighborhood.
- Monitor and participate in the Missing Link (Ssee Section 11.3) project.
- Promote bicycle sharing programs.
- Encourage Metro Transit to make bus stop improvements along Como Ave and 15th Ave SE.
- Encourage Metro Transit to evaluate implementing bus rapid transit service on Route 3.
- Promote Pedestrian & Transit-Oriented Design (PTOD) principles.

Housing

The recommendations within the Housing section support the concomitant Land Use recommendations and identify desired housing types. Specific recommendations include:

- Encourage medium density housing development in Transitional Industrial areas and along Community Corridors, and maintain low density housing patterns elsewhere in the neighborhood.
- Encourage the development of senior housing.
- Encourage the development of workforce housing.
- Promote the Como neighborhood to the workers of nearby businesses and institutions.
- Encourage the development of housing types that appeal to a broad range of people.
- Discourage rental practices and the development of housing that targets only students.
- Investigate strategies and programs that return single family dwellings currently being used as student rental housing to owner occupied, senior, or workforce housing.
- Develop housing maintenance and rental code enforcement strategies.
- Explore the Higher Density Corridor Housing Program.
- Initiate talks with the City about practices that will ensure reliable adherence to the ADU owner-occupancy requirement and impacts on duplex properties.
- Encourage property owners considering an ADU to evaluate off street parking options.

Economic Development

The recommendations within the Economic Development section are designed to support Housing recommendations and respond to stakeholder's desire for additional small-scale retail in the neighborhood. Specific recommendations include:

- Conduct an economic activity and employment inventory.
- Survey local workers to gather their housing and neighborhood preferences.
- Promote participation in the Great Streets program.
- Promote mixed-use buildings.
- Investigate improvement district options and partnerships.
- Investigate community development corporation (CDC) options and partnerships.

Environment

The recommendations within the Environment section focus on supporting existing programs and providing information to residents. Specific recommendations include:

- Promote and participate in Como Green Village activities.
- Participate in University District Alliance environmental programs.
- Connect neighborhood stakeholders with existing informational resources.
- Promote and support urban agriculture.
- Enhance litter, trash, and graffiti removal efforts.
- Promote the Pack & Give Back program.
- Promote reduce, reuse, and recycle programs and activities.
- Continue to work with the City and other agencies and actively monitor TCE cleanup.

Parks and Open Space

The recommendations within the Parks and Open Space section focus on policy, evaluation, and future park planning. Specific recommendations include:

- Evaluate existing park programs and facilities.
- Provide input on the location of future parks in the Como neighborhood.
- Monitor the Missing Link project.
- Review parks and open space policies.
- Collaborate and coordinate policies with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.

Heritage Preservation

The recommendations within the Heritage Preservation section focus on research and documentation of existing and potential historic properties in the neighborhood. Specific recommendations include:

- Document existing Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) designated properties.
- Document properties being considered by Minneapolis HPC for designation.
- Research, evaluate, and nominate worthy properties for Minneapolis HPC designation.
- Investigate partnerships with historic preservation advocacy groups.
- Revise and update the Como architecture styles guide.
- Research implementing a Museum in the Streets project.
- Pursue a conservation district for core areas of the Como neighborhood.

Arts and Culture

The recommendations within the Arts and Culture section focus on identifying resources, building upon existing successes, and sharing information with the neighborhood. Specific recommendations include:

- Create an arts and cultural resource inventory.
- Expand the Como neighborhood festival.
- Promote public art and pursue public art funding.
- Strengthen connections with public libraries.

- Research Creative Placemaking and other strategies that support the arts.
- Promote Little Free Libraries.

Public Safety

The recommendations within the Public Safety section include bolstering existing programs and evaluating technology in the near term and implementing design strategies in the long term. Specific recommendations include:

- Work with local law enforcement agencies.
- Enhance the Neighborhood Watch program.
- Consider implementing a “Put Your Junk In Your Trunk” style public safety campaign.
- Evaluate street lighting.
- Evaluate adding security cameras at key locations.
- Evaluate real estate development proposals using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.
- Create CPTED toolkit for property owners.

Institutions

The recommendations within the Institutions section focus on building connections with local and neighboring organizations. Specific recommendations include:

- Strengthen connections with religious institutions.
- Strengthen connections with Minneapolis Public Schools.
- Strengthen connections with the University of Minnesota.
- Work with the Office of Housing and Residential Life.
- Strengthen connections with the Office of Student and Community Relations.
- Maintain connections with University District Alliance.
- Strengthen connections with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

This plan will be consistent with the following applicable policies of [The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth](#):

Land Use Policy 1.1: Establish land use regulations to achieve the highest possible development standards, enhance the environment, protect public health, support a vital mix of land uses, and promote flexible approaches to carry out the comprehensive plan..

1.1.6 Develop small area plans for designated land use features, particularly Activity Centers, Growth Centers, and Major Retail Centers, in consultation with neighborhood associations, residents, and other stakeholders.

Land Use Policy 1.5: Promote growth and encourage overall city vitality by directing new commercial and mixed use development to designated corridors and districts.

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.

Land Use Policy 1.8: Preserve the stability and diversity of the city's neighborhoods while allowing for increased density in order to attract and retain long-term residents and businesses.

1.8.1 Promote a range of housing types and residential densities, with highest density development concentrated in and along appropriate land use features.

Land Use 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.

1.9.1 Support the continued presence of existing small-scale retail sales and commercial services along Community Corridors.

Land Use Policy 1.11: Preserve and enhance a system of Neighborhood Commercial Nodes that includes a mix of housing, neighborhood-serving retail, and community uses.

1.11.2 Support the continued presence of small-scale, neighborhood-serving retail and commercial services in Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.

Land Use Policy 1.14: Maintain Industrial Employment Districts to provide appropriate locations for industrial land uses.

1.14.2 Allow industrial uses outside of Industrial Employment Districts to transition over time to other uses.

1.14.3 Restrict the development and expansion of non-industrial uses within designated Industrial Employment Districts, limiting non-industrial uses to the types of uses and locations designated in the Industrial Land Use and Employment Plan.

Land Use Policy 1.15: Support development of Growth Centers as locations for concentration of jobs and housing, and supporting services.

1.15.1 Support development of Growth Centers through planning efforts to guide decisions and prioritize investments in these areas.

1.15.4 Promote the integration of major public and private institutional campuses located in Growth Centers, including health care and educational services, with the function and character of surrounding areas.

Transportation Policy 2.1: Encourage growth and reinvestment by sustaining the development of a multi-modal transportation system.

2.1.1 Continue addressing the needs of all modes of transportation, emphasizing the development of a more effective transit network.

Transportation Policy 2.2: Support successful streets and communities by balancing the needs of all modes of transportation with land use policy.

2.2.3 Promote street and sidewalk design that balances handling traffic flow with pedestrian orientation and principles of traditional urban form.

Transportation Policy 2.3: Encourage walking throughout the city by ensuring that routes are safe, comfortable, pleasant, and accessible.

2.3.1 Ensure that there are safe and accessible pedestrian routes to major destinations, including transit corridors, from nearby residential areas.

2.3.2 Identify and encourage the development of pedestrian routes within Activity Centers, Growth Centers, and other commercial areas that have superior pedestrian facilities.

Transportation Policy 2.5: Ensure that bicycling throughout the city is safe, comfortable and pleasant.

2.5.1 Complete a network of on- and off-street primary bicycle corridors.

2.5.5 Provide public bicycle parking facilities in major destinations such as Downtown, Activity Centers and Growth Centers.

Transportation Policy 2.9: Promote reliable funding and pricing strategies to manage transportation demand and improve alternative modes.

2.9.3 Link transit improvements, such as streetcars, to economic development outcomes.

Housing Policy 3.1: Grow by increasing the supply of housing.

3.1.1 Support the development of new medium- and high-density housing in appropriate locations throughout the city.

3.1.2 Use planning processes and other opportunities for community engagement to build community understanding of the important role that urban density plays in stabilizing and strengthening the city.

Housing Policy 3.2: Support housing density in locations that are well connected by transit, and are close to commercial, cultural and natural amenities.

3.2.1 Encourage and support housing development along commercial and community corridors, and in and near growth centers, activity centers, retail centers, transit station areas, and neighborhood commercial nodes.

3.2.2 Engage in dialogue with communities about appropriate locations for housing density, and ways to make new development compatible with existing structures and uses.

Economic Development Policy 4.9: Focus economic development efforts in strategic locations for continued growth and sustained vitality.

4.9.1 Prioritize economic development efforts around designated neighborhood commercial nodes, commercial corridors, activity centers, and growth centers.

Public Services and Facilities Policy 5.1: Coordinate facility planning among city departments and public institutions.

5.1.4 Develop cooperative programming that takes advantage of the resources and missions of various public institutions.

Environment Policy 6.14: Preserve and enhance the quality of the urban environment to promote sustainable lifestyles for its citizens.

6.14.1 Promote environmental stewardship and awareness through education and outreach.

Heritage Preservation Policy 8.9: Integrate preservation planning in the larger planning process.

8.9.1 Incorporate preservation at the earliest stage of comprehensive planning, small area plans, and neighborhood revitalization strategies.

Arts and Culture Policy 9.1: Integrate and utilize arts and culture as a resource for economic development.

9.1.8 Make Minneapolis a more livable place for artists through support for arts initiatives that contribute to the city's community development priorities.

Urban Design Policy 10.5: Support the development of multi-family residential dwellings of appropriate form and scale.

10.5.1 Smaller-scale, multi-family residential development is more appropriate along Community Corridors and Neighborhood Commercial Nodes.

10.5.2 Medium-scale, multi-family residential development is more appropriate along Commercial Corridors, Activity Centers, Transit Station Areas and Growth Centers outside of Downtown Minneapolis.

Urban Design Policy 10.9: Support urban design standards that emphasize traditional urban form with pedestrian scale design features at the street level in mixed-use and transit-oriented development.

10.9.1 Encourage both mixed-use buildings and a mix of uses in separate buildings where appropriate.

This plan's land use and design guidance is largely consistent with existing comprehensive plan guidance for the applicable land use features. The plan is also largely consistent in terms of its guidance on other topics, including housing, transportation, and urban design.

FUTURE RELATED ACTIONS

Implementation of the plan recommendations is part of Planning staff's 2016 work plan and will likely continue into the future. Elements of this include:

- **Comprehensive plan changes.** This plan will be incorporated into the City's comprehensive plan, including incorporating this plan's future land use map into the comprehensive plan's citywide Future Land Use map. This requires Metropolitan Council review for consistency with regional systems plans, in accordance with state law. As this review follows City approvals, City adoption of the plan as part of the comprehensive plan will be contingent on the pending Metropolitan Council review. This will move forward after plan adoption, possibly bundled with other pending comprehensive plan updates.
- **Potential text amendment or rezoning.** While the plan does not propose major land use changes that would necessarily impact base zoning (at least not immediately), it does suggest some potential zoning code changes. These may be accommodated through a future rezoning study – again, perhaps handled jointly with other pending changes. In terms of timing, any rezoning study work needed will likely be done after the completion of the major comprehensive plan update now underway.
- **Development review.** Future development proposals for property in the Southeast Como neighborhood will require Planning Commission review of development applications such as rezonings, conditional use permits, and site plan review. In this way, the Planning Commission has a role in the incremental implementation of the plan. Environmental impact assessments and/or transportation demand management studies will be undertaken as necessary.

- **Capital project prioritization.** The capital improvements process (through the City, County, and other public entities) provides an important way to implement recommended projects in the comprehensive plan. This plan's identification of these projects provides additional priority and weight to them in project review and ranking. It also allows for proposals to be made when funding opportunities (such as grants) emerge.
- **Support for stakeholder-led implementation efforts.** As this is the neighborhood's plan, some implementation may be led by the neighborhood association, based on their interest and capacity. This is anticipated to be ongoing and will need periodic City review or assistance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A number of comments were received during the 45-day comment period from individuals, community organizations, and government staff. There were a number of changes and updates made to the draft plan as a result of these comments, including adding detail and clarification around topics and concepts in the plan. A table listing the comments and the responses to them is attached.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council **approve** *The Como Blueprint: A Small Area Plan for the Como Neighborhood of Minneapolis* and **amend** the policy guidance for the area into the City's comprehensive plan with the following conditions:

- The comprehensive plan amendment is subject to final review and approval by the Metropolitan Council.
- The features and recommendations of this plan will be used to guide preparation of an updated comprehensive plan in upcoming years. As with all small area plans, features and recommendations of this plan will be reevaluated and may be adjusted or updated in the next update to the Comprehensive Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- Maps of existing and future land use
- Table of 45 day public comments submitted and responses
- *The Como Blueprint: A Small Area Plan for the Como Neighborhood of Minneapolis* (online)

The plan is also available online at: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/projects/ComoBlueprint>.