

**Thematic Plan/Public Realm Framework**

*Property Location:* Downtown Minneapolis  
*Project Name:* Downtown Public Realm Framework  
*Prepared By:* Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, (612) 673-5058  
*Wards:* 3,5,6,7  
*Project Contact:* Kjersti Monson, Director, Long Range Planning  
*Request:* Adopt the Downtown Public Realm Framework policy document

**SITE DATA**

<b>Ward(s)</b>	3,5,6,7
<b>Neighborhood(s)</b>	Near North, Sumner/Glenwood, Harrison, Bryn Mawr, North Loop, Downtown West, Loring Park, Elliott Park, Downtown East, Cedar-Riverside, St. Anthony West, Nicollet Island/East Bank, and Marcy-Holmes
<b>Designated Future Land Use</b>	N/A
<b>Land Use Features</b>	Growth Center: Downtown; Commercial Corridors: Hennepin Avenue, Nicollet Avenue, Lyndale Avenue
<b>Small Area Plan(s)</b>	Cedar-Riverside Small Area Plan (2008), Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Master Plan (2014), Downtown East / North Loop Master Plan (2003), North Loop Small Area Plan (2010), Historic Mills District Master Plan(1998) and Update (2001), Minneapolis Near Northside Master Plan (2002), Elliot Park Neighborhood Master Plan (2002), The Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan (2013), Nicollet Island East Bank Small Area Plan (2014), Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan (2007), St. Anthony Falls Historic District Guidelines (2012), RiverFirst Plan (2012, MPRB), Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan (2015, MPRB)
<b>Citywide Policy Plans</b>	The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth (2009) , Access Minneapolis – Ten Year Transportation Action Plan (2008), Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board Comprehensive Plan 2007-2020 (2007, MPRB) . Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan (2015, MPRB)
<b>Other References</b>	Minneapolis Bike and Ped Counts (Annual, Public Works) , Minneapolis Capital Improvement Plan (Annual, Public Works), Metro Transit, Existing & Planned Transitways, Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar – Locally Preferred Alternative Council Action, Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan, Metropolitan Council 2040 Transportation Policy Plan

<b>Date Application Deemed Complete</b>	April 15, 2016	<b>Date Extension Letter Sent</b>	May 2, 2016
<b>End of 60-Day Decision Period</b>	June 14, 2016	<b>End of 120-Day Decision Period</b>	August 13, 2016

## PLAN SUMMARY

The *Downtown Public Realm Framework* is the City's contributing plan to the joint *Pathways to Places* initiative of the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The purpose of the Downtown Public Realm Framework is to provide unified guidance to inform and coordinate the work of public and private entities that shape and invest in the public realm. It is intended to inform and guide outcomes in capital planning, site plan review, and public/private partnerships toward the coordinated enhancement of the public realm.

The *Downtown Public Realm Framework* plan begins with introductory and contextual information. In *Chapter 1, Introduction*, the City of Minneapolis/Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board joint initiative *Pathways to Places* is defined, and other key information including how the Plan will be used, its purpose and need, and how it contributes to City goals, is outlined. In *Chapter 2, Context and Background*, an overview of the analysis and community outreach that was conducted to inform the plan is provided.

Policy guidance is provided in *Chapter 3, Physical Framework*. The *Physical Framework* chapter is organized around policy principles as well as several policy features that are depicted on maps. Features include potential linkages to increase connectivity, corridor typologies, and one feature district (the riverfront).

A summary of the policy guidance provided in *Chapter 3* follows:

### Policy Principles

- A principle of Whole System Planning, including physical connectivity, integrated modes, greening/resilience, and supportive development
- A principle of a People First public realm, including adherence to the Complete Streets policy, placemaking, and equity

### Physical Framework

The Physical Framework provides policy guidance intended to enhance character and increase connectivity of urban streets and plazas to the broader system of parks, trails, attractions and recreation opportunities in and around Downtown Minneapolis. It identifies new connections and clarifies existing connections along key corridors downtown, and provides recommendations for enhancing the pedestrian experience on those corridors through greening strategies, street furnishing and land use decisions.

The Physical Framework supplements existing City policy governing rights-of-way. It defers to existing zoning and land use regulations. It provides policy guidance in areas identified as key to the creation of a cohesive public realm Downtown, including corridors, connections, and the riverfront.

Audiences for the Physical Framework include the private sector, city staff, and system partners. The Framework outlines policy guidance for the following features and values:

- Potential Linkages – opportunities to increase connectivity have been identified as potential linkages, which appear in this chapter on an annotated map.
- Corridor Typology – the Physical Framework includes guidance for three types of corridor: Destination, Local Commerce, and Connector. This guidance supplements the existing designation of most Downtown streets in ACCESS Minneapolis as Activity Area Streets, providing more nuanced policies based on desired characteristics described below:
  - Destination Corridor - streets that visitors are likely to go to enjoy dining, entertainment, and great public space; for those attending conferences, sporting events, and concerts, these corridors serve as the “image of the city.”
  - Local Commerce Corridor – streets that residents are likely to go to hang out at a café, do their grocery shopping, access their lobby, or seek professional services.

- Connector Corridor – streets that contribute to strong connectivity throughout the downtown area for people moving from their neighborhood or hotel to a downtown experience.
- Central Riverfront Feature District - The Mississippi River is central to the public realm in Downtown. It is a major attraction for recreation and leisure and provides a natural focal point for shaping and enhancing a sense of place and identity downtown. While much of the Central Riverfront is already developed or parkland, key sites still exist as long-range opportunities to create new destinations. Additionally there is much room for improvement in wayfinding and strengthening connections from the downtown core to and from the riverfront. The *Downtown Public Realm Framework* gathers existing policies related to the riverfront into one place and provides cohesive guidance for a legible riverfront district.
- Incremental Implementation - the Physical Framework will be implemented incrementally. Corridor, connectivity, and district guidance will be included in staff reports and applied in capital planning and site plan review as relevant projects emerge.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

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

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

- 2.2.2 Establish and use guidelines for the design and use of streets based on both transportation function and adjoining land use.
- 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.
- 2.3.3 Develop and implement guidelines for streets and sidewalks to ensure safe, attractive, and accessible pedestrian facilities

### **Economic Development Policy 4.11: Attract businesses to the city through strategic infrastructure investments.**

- 4.11.3 Prioritize strategic infrastructure investments in alignment with small area plans and other adopted policies.

### **Economic Development Policy 4.16 Strengthen Downtown's position as a regional cultural, entertainment and commercial center that serves Downtown employees, visitors, and residents.**

- 4.16.6 Preserve and build upon Downtown's cultural, entertainment and hospitality amenities, such as the convention center, professional sports venues and the Central Riverfront.
- 4.16.7 Improve real and perceived safety issues in Downtown.

**Environment Policy 6.8: Encourage a healthy thriving urban tree canopy and other desirable forms of vegetation.**

6.8.3 The city's built infrastructure will support a healthy thriving urban tree canopy through street and sidewalk guidelines and other means.

**Open Space and Parks Policy 7.1: Promote the physical and mental health of residents and visitors by recognizing that safe outdoor amenities and spaces support exercise, play, relaxation and socializing.**

7.1.3 Provide safe pedestrian and bike routes to open spaces and parks.

**Open Space and Parks Policy 7.3: Maintain and improve the accessibility of open spaces and parks to all residents.**

7.3.1 Ensure that access to the city's lakes, streams and the Mississippi River continues to be maintained for the benefit of present and future citizens of Minneapolis.

**Open Space and Parks 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.**

7.6.1 Where open spaces and the built environment interface, seek greater design integration between them to create interesting spaces for active and passive use.

7.6.2 Provide visual and physical connections between urban areas and open spaces including lakes and rivers.

7.6.3 Invest in the greening of streets, particularly those that connect into and supplement the parks and open spaces network.

**Open Space and Parks Policy 7.8: Strengthen existing and create new partnerships, including public-private partnerships, to deliver the best park and open space system possible.**

7.8.1 Continue to collaborate and coordinate space sharing, maintenance agreements, and programming among public agencies.

7.8.3 Encourage new development projects to incorporate open spaces and green spaces through land use regulations and other regulatory tools.

**Open Space and Parks Policy 7.9: Work to develop high quality open spaces in Downtown.**

7.9.2 Support the incremental greening of Downtown through the addition of more trees, plantings, and small open spaces.

7.9.3 Promote the Mississippi River as a major landscape feature and recreation opportunity.

**Urban Design Policy 10.2: Integrate pedestrian scale design features into Downtown site and building designs and infrastructure improvements.**

10.2.1 The ground floor of buildings should be occupied by active uses with direct connections to the sidewalk.

10.2.3 Ensure that buildings incorporate design elements that eliminate long stretches of blank, inactive building walls such as windows, green walls, architectural details, and murals.

10.2.4 Integrate components in building designs that offer protection to pedestrians, such as awnings and canopies, as a means to encourage pedestrian activity along the street.

10.2.8 Coordinate site designs and public right-of-way improvements to provide adequate sidewalk space for pedestrian movement, street trees, landscaping, street furniture, sidewalk cafes and other elements of active pedestrian areas.

**Urban Design Policy 10.14: Encourage development that provides functional and attractive gathering spaces.**

- 10.14.1 Increase resident access to and use of facilities and meeting spaces in parks, libraries, schools, and not-for-profit institutions and places of worship.
- 10.14.2 Investigate existing gathering spaces on publicly owned land that are underutilized and make recommendations about how they could be improved.
- 10.14.4 Emphasize improving public access to and movement along the riverfront.
- 10.14.5 Views of the river should favor vistas that try to give longer views of the river.

**Urban Design Policy 10.16: Design streets and sidewalks to ensure safety, pedestrian comfort and aesthetic appeal.**

- 10.16.2 Provide streetscape amenities, including street furniture, trees, and landscaping, that buffer pedestrians from auto traffic, parking areas, and winter elements.
- 10.16.3 Integrate placement of street furniture and fixtures, including landscaping and lighting, to serve a function and not obstruct pedestrian pathways and pedestrian flows.
- 10.16.4 Employ pedestrian-friendly features along streets, including street trees and landscaped boulevards that add interest and beauty while also managing storm water, appropriate lane widths, raised intersections, and high-visibility crosswalks.

**Urban Design Policy 10.19: Landscaping is encouraged in order to complement the scale of the site and its surroundings, enhance the built environment, create and define public and private spaces, buffer and screen, incorporate crime prevention principles, and provide shade, aesthetic appeal, and environmental benefits.**

- 10.19.5 Landscaping plans should be designed to facilitate future maintenance including the consideration of irrigation systems, drought and salt-resistant species, ongoing performance of storm water treatment practices, snow storage, access to sun, proximity to buildings, paved surfaces and overhead utilities.
- 10.19.7 Boulevard landscaping and improvements, in accordance with applicable city policies, are encouraged.

**Urban Design Policy 10.24: Preserve the natural ecology and the historical features that define Minneapolis' unique identity in the region.**

- 10.24.1 Incorporate natural features and historic sites into planning and development in order to link the city with the river, the lakes and creeks.
- 10.24.2 Continue to revitalize the Central Riverfront and Upper River area as a residential, recreational, cultural and entertainment district.
- 10.24.3 Increase public access to, along and across the river in the form of parks, cyclist/pedestrian bridges, greenways, sidewalks and trails.
- 10.24.4 Ensure that future riverfront development will be consistent with the city's Mississippi River Critical Area Plan.

## FUTURE RELATED ACTIONS

The *Downtown Public Realm Framework* was developed in concert with four companion pieces, which will be submitted in the future as Receive-and-File items:

- The **Public Realm Guidelines**, a manual of the City's guidelines for public realm enhancements citywide.

- The **Placemaking Hub**, an online one-stop shop for those seeking information about public realm enhancement programs and requirements.
- The **Downtown Minneapolis Programmable Space Inventory**, a study that identified and inventoried potentially programmable public spaces Downtown.
- The **Implementation Index**, a catalogue of funding and implementation strategies that have been used locally and nationally for public realm enhancement.

Implementation of the *Downtown Public Realm Framework* plan recommendations will 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.
- **Development review.** Future development proposals that are subject to corridor, connectivity, or district guidance according to the *Downtown Public Realm Framework* will be among the topics City staff will cover with developers as they prepare their development applications. Additionally, staff will make the Planning Commission aware of relevant guidance in their consideration of applications.
- **Capital project influence.** 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 priority corridors provides additional priority and weight to them in relevant capital 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 plan and reflects the vision of not only the City but of downtown neighborhoods, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Downtown Improvement District, and other stakeholders, some implementation activities may be led by entities other than the City, based on their interest and capacity. Such initiatives may require periodic City review or assistance.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The *Downtown Public Realm Framework* project initiated its community engagement process in November of 2014, ending in July 2016. The process was conducted in three phases; Initiation/Analysis, Research/Outreach, and Recommendation/Comment. The engagement was structured to inform, educate, gain insights, and capture priorities while providing opportunities for meaningful connections and conversations with stakeholders.

**STEERING AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES.** City and Park Board staff formed a shared Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee, conducted joint community engagement, and shaped the overall project as a cohesive and integrated team.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEES** The City of Minneapolis is host to Advisory Committees that play vital roles in reviewing and providing input on planning processes and shaping projects citywide. Staff engaged

with several advisory committees seeking specific feedback and providing updates on the progress of the planning process. The following advisory committees were crucial to the development of the plan: Committee on People with Disabilities, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging, DID 2025 Homelessness Committee, DID 2025 Greening and Public Realm Committee, Minneapolis Tree Advisory Commission.

**ONLINE INTERACTIONS** The City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board hosted a survey tool Mapita to invite individuals to participate in an online mapping exercise. Mapita collected data points and responses using a survey form and map. 515 responses were collected with over 3,000 data points identified on the map. These responses informed and supported the identification of key corridors and destinations identified in the plan.

**EVENTS** Community events and fairs offered City staff a unique opportunity to meet residents, visitors and workers in the places where they were already interacting with their community. Partnering with local groups and organizations to participate and meet the community in their neighborhood offered increased visibility of the project and planning process, and reduced barriers for engaging directly with the City. Each event hosted offered a venue in which to host displays, ask questions, and participate in shared learning exercises while building relationships with the community. Staff attended the following events in 2015/2016:

- Mini-Polis
- Lyndale Open Streets
- Mill City Farmers Market
- Loring Park National Night Out
- Downtown Open Streets

**PUBLIC COMMENTS.** The 45-day review period ran from June 6<sup>th</sup> to July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016. In order to promote attendance at the Planning Commission public hearing, CPED sent public notices to the neighborhoods. Additionally, Citizens for Loring Park Community advertised the public hearing to their email distribution list of 2,000 people.

The comments received to date include recommendations for additional linkages and connections specifically around Bassett Creek and the Farmers Market; recommendations on cost-saving street light fixtures, and feedback on operational roadway recommendations surrounding Loring Park, safety concerns and traffic control considerations and enhanced greening recommendations.

A table of all comments received has been provided as an attachment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the City Planning Commission and the City Council **adopt** the Downtown Public Realm Framework plan as an articulation of and amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

The features and recommendations of this plan will be used to guide preparation of an updated comprehensive plan in upcoming years. As with all 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

1. Public comments
2. Plan components:
  - a. Physical Framework map
  - b. Potential Linkages map and key
3. The official plan website: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/lrp/WCMSIP-134268>