

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, December 15, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, David Guetschow, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Bill Richtman, Deanna Seppanen, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests:

Media:

1. Welcome and Introductions; Consent Agenda

Dean Cummings, co-chair of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED), welcomed members of the committee and members of the community.

The October 20, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

The December 15, 2025 meeting agenda was approved.

2. Announcement that the Union Park Community Plan will be updated in 2026 presented by Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Ms. Timberlake Sullivan informed the committee that the UPDC 10 year plan (known as the Union Park Community Plan) will be updated in 2026.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the topics that will be addressed are:

- Land Use and Economic Development
- Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Housing
- Natural Resources and the Environment
- Historic Preservation

The initial task will be the creation and distribution of a community survey to ascertain Union Park residents' concerns, goals, and priorities.

Committee members may volunteer to serve, or may be asked to serve, on the Community Plan task force.

3. Request to the local colleges and universities (University of St. Thomas, Concordia, Macalester, Hamline) for student economic analyses of the recent decrease in the market value of apartment buildings in the twin cities metro area presented by Mark Morrow

ACTION: Union Park District Council SUPPORTS a request to the local colleges and universities (University of St. Thomas, Concordia, Macalester, Hamline) for student economic analyses of the recent decrease in the market value of apartment buildings in the twin cities metro area. The analyses will be presented this Spring at a forum hosted by UPDC.

Mr. Morrow stated that he first became aware of the decrease in market value for apartment buildings from Mayor Melvin Carter's 09/04/2025 Budget Address. Mr. Morrow stated that he is concerned by the lack of public discussion of the possible causes of this decrease and of ways to address the possible causes, of possible harms and ways to minimize the harms, and of possible benefits / opportunities and ways to realize those benefits.

Mr. Morrow proposed that Union Park District Council ask the local colleges and universities (University of St. Thomas, Concordia, Macalester, Hamline) for student economic analyses of the recent decrease in market value of apartment buildings in the twin cities metro area. The analyses would be presented this Spring at a forum hosted by UPDC.

Discussion included:

- Support for the request.
- Additional issues to be addressed including:
 - Implications of the conversion from the current property tax to a land value tax.
 - Clarification of the definition of apartment and residential non-homestead.
 - A request to analyze apartment market values relative to rents.
 - A request to analyze apartment market value relative to vacancy rates.
 - A request to analyze apartment market value relative to rent stabilization.
 - A request for data on the number and rate of appeals of assessed property value.

A motion to support the above proposal was made, seconded, and approved (unanimously).

4. Request for the City to create a standing committee on fire safety for residential zoning districts presented by Mark Morrow

ACTION: Union Park District Council SUPPORTS a request to the Saint Paul City Council to create a standing committee on fire safety for residential zoning districts. The committee should include representatives from

- the fire department
- the Department of Safety and Inspections
- apartment owners
- renters (including student renters)
- local universities.

It is Union Park District Council's position that:

- a plan for a safe evacuation (with a least 2 routes, in case 1 is blocked by smoke/fire);
 - smoke and carbon monoxide detectors that notify all occupants in all units and automatically notify 911 or a central monitoring facility that will notify 911;
 - fire extinguishers; and
 - at least 2 safe escape routes to the ground
- are a right for all renters rather than a privilege, regardless of the number of units in their rental dwelling.

Union Park District Council will share our findings with neighboring district councils, and local colleges and universities.

Mr. Morrow proposed that Union Park District Council urge the City to create a standing committee on fire safety for residential zoning districts. The committee should include representatives from

- the fire department
- the Department of Safety and Inspections
- apartment owners
- renters (including student renters)
- local universities.

Mr. Morrow proposed that Union Park District Council take the position that:

- a plan for a safe evacuation (with a least 2 routes, in case 1 is blocked by smoke/fire);
 - smoke and carbon monoxide detectors that notify all occupants in all units and automatically notify 911 or a central monitoring facility that will notify 911;
 - fire extinguishers; and
 - at least 2 safe escape routes to the ground
- are a right for all renters rather than a privilege, regardless of the number of units in their rental dwelling.

Mr. Morrow presented a comparison of fire safety requirements for 1-2 unit dwellings as compared with 3 or more unit dwellings.

Discussion included:

- Concern that the increased number of unrelated occupants per dwelling and the H districts' dimensional standards and design standards have decreased the safety of new dwellings.
- Support for fire extinguishers.
- Support for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (which fire code already requires).
- Clarification that the position statement not only endorses smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, but also endorses automatic notification by the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors of 911 or a central monitoring facility that will notify 911.
- Clarification that the position statement is not endorsing a requirement for a second exit for all rental dwellings, but is limited to endorsing 2 safe escape routes to the ground.

A motion to support the above proposal was made, seconded, and approved (unanimously).

5. Request to revise the H district zoning codes presented by Mark Morrow

ACTION: Union Park District Council SUPPORTS a request to replace the "Historic"/H1 and H2 residential district zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, with the prior R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2 zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, (modified to allow up to 6 units per dwelling); and revert lots currently zoned H1 or H2 to their prior zoning status (R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2).

Union Park District Council SUPPORTS a request for an immediate moratorium on construction on H1 and H2 lots in the Student Overlay District until the above is addressed.

(If the City Council feels that a moratorium limited to the Student Overlay would be unfair to the remainder of the properties in the H Districts, immediately implement a moratorium on construction on H1 and H2 lots throughout the City until the above is addressed.)

Union Park District Council SUPPORTS a request to order a multi-expert study of residential zoning codes after the above are completed, with representation including representation including

- Planning and Economic Development staff,
- a tree canopy expert,
- a rainwater management expert, a deeply affordable housing expert, and
- an ownership expert,

to better align the city's policies with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan's multi-faceted goals, including

- Land Use,
- Housing, and
- Water Management.

Mr. Morrow presented an update on the demolition of viable housing, loss of trees, and loss of permeable surface on lots zoned H1 and H2 in the area around the University of St. Thomas.

Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan calls for the city to "Expand permitted housing types in Urban Neighborhoods (as defined in the Land Use Chapter) to include duplexes, triplexes, town homes, small-scale multi-family and accessory dwelling units to allow for neighborhood-scale density increases, broadened housing choices and intergenerational living. (Policy H-48.)" In response to this, the city initiated the 1-4 Unit Housing Study. Based on the study's recommendations, on October 18, 2023, the Saint Paul City Council replaced the R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, and RT2 residential zoning districts with the new H1 and H2 residential zoning districts, with the intention to expand housing opportunities throughout the city.

Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan also calls for the city to "ensure neighborhood housing assets are not prematurely removed" (Policy H-51). In response to this, the 1-4 Unit Housing Study included the objective "To encourage and promote reuse of existing homes and infill development in existing neighborhoods, lots, and backyards, while discouraging demolition of existing viable housing." The study's community engagement included the question from the Planning Commission "Does the draft ordinance strike the right balance of encouraging more neighborhood-scale housing to be developed over the long term on lots throughout the city, while also managing the pace to minimize potential displacement pressures on existing neighborhoods and residents?" As a result, the approved zoning code amendments include the statement "The district allows for reuse and/or conversion of existing homes and infill development in existing neighborhoods, lots, and backyards, without having to demolish existing viable housing."

Saint Paul's Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan also calls for the Mayor's Office to "declare the stability of the urban forest a City priority" (The Urban Forest), and for the city to "Support a healthy urban forest and urban forestry initiatives" (WR-6). Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan calls for the city to increase the urban tree canopy from 32.5% to 40% (a 23% increase) by 2030 in order to reduce the urban heat island effect and to absorb carbon.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan also encourages "the use of Minimal Impact Design Standards (MIDS) for new development" (WR-18). "The overall goal of MIDS is to promote – especially in dense urban areas – Low Impact Development, which focuses on keeping rain where it falls to the maximum extent practical."

The revised residential dimensional standards are

- enabling the demolition of viable housing, which is contrary to a goal of Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, contrary to an objective of the 1-4 Unit Study, and contrary to a stated intent of the H districts;
- enabling the loss of trees, which is contrary to goals of Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan and to a goal of Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan; and
- enabling a decrease in the ability of each lot to keep rain where it falls to the maximum extent practical, which is contrary to a goal of Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Morrow stated that the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED) and Councilmember Coleman have been informed of these negative consequences. He stated that he would have preferred that PED and/or the City Council had addressed the change in the dimensional standards, which is enabling these negative consequences. However, because both are aware and neither have addressed the cause, he feels that Union Park District Council should propose a course of action to align with Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Climate Action and Resilience Plan. Mr. Morrow proposed that Union Park District Council strongly urge the City to

- replace the "Historic"/H1 and H2 residential district zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, with the prior R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2 zoning codes, dimensional standards, and design standards, (modified to allow up to 6 units per dwelling);
- revert lots currently zoned H1 or H2 to their prior zoning status (R1, R2, R3, R4, RT1, RT2); and
- immediately implement a moratorium on construction on H1 and H2 lots in the Student Overlay District until the above is addressed.

- (If the City Council feels that a moratorium limited to the Student Overlay would be unfair to the remainder of the properties in the H Districts, immediately implement a moratorium on construction on H1 and H2 lots throughout the City until the above is addressed.)

After the above concerns have been addressed, Union Park District Council strongly urges the City Council to order a multi-expert study of residential zoning codes, with representation including

- Planning and Economic Development staff
- a tree canopy expert
- a rainwater management expert
- a deeply affordable housing expert
- a rental dwelling expert
- an ownership dwelling expert

to better align the city's policies with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan's multi-faceted goals, including

- Land Use
- Housing
- Water Management.

Discussion included:

- a concern that the current dimensional standards do not feel in synchrony with the existing buildings in the neighborhood.
- a concern that the proposed changes might not allow up to 6 units per dwelling
[note: the proposal includes the statement that the changes would continue to allow for up to 6 units per dwelling].

A motion to support the above proposal was made, seconded, and approved (aye 5, nay 2).

6. Action Item Follow Up presented by Dean Cummings

- Augustus Corner (from 09//2024 and 11/2024)
Because the notification of the Board of Zoning Appeals hearing regarding a rear set back variance for one of the Augustus Corner properties was received after the 11/17/2025 CLUED meeting, UPDC was not able to provide a position statement regarding the specific request. However, because UPDC had supported a previous lot split variance and the project itself, Mr. Cummings and Mr. Morrow attended the BZA hearing and provided public testimony, both on behalf of UPDC and as individuals. After extensive discussion, the request was approved by the BZA.

7. Staff Report & Announcements presented by Leah Timberlake Sullivan

- Residents of State of Minnesota House District 64A were reminded that tomorrow, December 16, 2025, is date of the special primary for the seat.
January 27, 2026 is the date of the special election for the seat.
- Due to the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday (Monday, January 19, 2026), the next CLUED meeting will be Monday, January 26, 2026.



Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, October 20, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Joe Hughes, Reece Johnson, Mark Morrow, Ben Quam, Bill Richtman, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Jim Marti

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Mike Hahm (United Village),
Beth Commers (Saint Paul Department of Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO),
Deputy Director Human Rights & Labor Standards),
beth.commers@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Der Vue (Saint Paul Department of Safety & Inspections, Fire Safety Supervisor),
der.vue@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Reka Suranyi

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Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Dean Cummings

Committee members present: Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Bill Richtman, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Mark Morrow

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan, Finley Roman (Intern)

Guests: Bill Dermody

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, August 18, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Ben Quam, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Bill Richtman

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Sean Ryan (Eclective Creative Collective), Jeanne Weigum (Scenic Saint Paul)