

III EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF TRAFFIC AND PARKING TECHNICAL REPORT



Executive Summary

Traffic and Parking Technical Report

As part of the process to update the Historic Mills District Plan, SRF Consulting Group, Inc. was retained to evaluate parking and traffic as they relate to the new vision for the Historic Mills District.

This report is the technical supplement to the Historic Mills District Plan Update, December 2000 on issues relating to traffic and parking. This report accomplishes the following items:

- summarizes the traffic and parking issues identified during plan update process,
- inventories parking user groups and their needs,
- details locations and conceptual designs for potential new parking facilities,
- conducts a macro-level economic evaluation for each proposed facility,
- explores the feasibility of using underground mined space for parking, and
- recommends strategies to address the identified parking and traffic problems.

Three summary tables, four financial proformas and the complete Mined Space Parking Study Report are included as Appendices to the SRF Traffic and Parking Technical Report.

The following is a summary of recommended strategies.

Traffic

- Extension of the Downtown Grid System – The extension of the downtown grid will disperse traffic volumes over multiple streets, thereby lessening the need for new arterial style roadways
- Roadway Design – Each new roadway should be designed and constructed with a minimum of one through-lane, plus turn lanes in each direction. At major generators (i.e., parking facilities) the roadway should be sized to accommodate adequate vehicular storage for both pre and post event operation, particularly for all ramps east of Portland Avenue
- Balancing Vehicular and Pedestrian Needs – Washington Avenue must be retained as a major arterial for distributing vehicular traffic. At the same time, safe pedestrian crossings must be established at all cross-streets. Improving the pedestrian crossing experience should be considered encouraged.

New Parking Facilities

To meet the needs of the proposed non-residential development, the current users in and adjacent to the area and downtown commuters, the construction of a minimum of 3,000 replacement public parking spaces is recommended. Redevelopment in the

Historic Mills District will change the parking profile of the neighborhood from one based on being an absorber of parking demand (surface parking lots) to being a generator of parking demand (high density, mixed-use development). The surface parking lots serve tenants of several area buildings (e.g., Thresher Square, McDonald Building and American Trio) that do not have a dedicated off-street parking supply. In addition, these lots are used as part of the peripheral parking supply for downtown commuters. These surface lots are fully utilized on a daily basis. The Historic Mills District will lose approximately 2,900 surface parking spaces that are currently serving the neighboring uses and downtown commuters (see Table 1 of Appendix A). In addition, there are three cultural and recreational facilities (Guthrie, Mill City Museum, Milwaukee Depot Skating Rink) and several office and retail developments proposed for the Historic Mills District that will need access to parking.

The location and massing of several parking facilities were preliminarily identified in work sessions and a design charrette (see below and Figure 3). The following facilities are recommended for consideration as a means for meeting the projected parking demand for the area north of Washington Avenue:

- All residential developments will include sufficient structured parking in or under the developments to meet the residential parking needs.
- The Milwaukee Depot project will include 560 structured parking spaces to meet its own needs, plus provide some general area parking.
- Parking facilities on Parcels A and C will be sized to also support the parking needs for the Whitney Mill Quarter and Mill Place.
- A 300-plus public parking structure should be developed between Park and Chicago avenues, Washington and Second Street. The primary user group for this ramp will be employees and visitors to the Mill City Museum and office space above.
- The Guthrie Theater site should have approximately 500 to 650 spaces developed under or adjacent to the theater complex.
- The block bound by the proposed Chicago Avenue connection (Washington Avenue to Second Street) and the proposed Ninth Avenue connection (Washington Avenue and Second Street) could accommodate an approximately 500 stall, above-grade structure.

The parking plan described above will meet the needs of existing and new developments north of Washington, but will not address the remaining displaced parking needs of the area south of Washington or downtown commuters. Two options for meeting these remaining needs are proposed for further consideration.

Option One Two above-grade parking facilities could be constructed south of Washington:

- Chicago Avenue and the proposed Ninth Avenue connection, Third Street and Washington Avenue could accommodate an approximately 1,000 stall, above-grade structure with a transit facility located on the lower level. The transit facility would serve as a layover facility for both Minneapolis Route 18 and tour/charter/school buses. (This facility is referred to as the Third Street and Ninth Avenue Ramp).
- The block bound by Chicago Avenue, Fourth Street and Third Street could accommodate an approximately 1,000 stall, above-grade structure with a transit facility that would serve tour/charter/school buses. Access to Third Street or a ramp building over Norm McGrew Place would be highly recommended. (This facility is referred to as the Fourth Street and McGrew Ramp).

Option Two Mined space parking beneath the Historic Mills District as an alternative to the Third Street and Ninth Avenue Ramp and part of the Fourth Street and McGrew Ramp (see Summary of Mined Space Parking Study and Appendix C).

Mined Space Parking

Parking built to date in Minneapolis has been located in surface spaces or in structures located immediately above-grade or underground. As described in Appendix C to the Historic Mills District parking and traffic report, the Historic Mills District

area is geologically appropriate for construction of another alternative – parking in ‘mined space’ that could be excavated from the soft sandstone layer located underneath the limestone bedrock. Conceptual plans to build 2,322 spaces under the Historic Mills District are illustrated in the mined space appendix to the parking and traffic report. These spaces would be accessed via vehicular entrance/exit helices and pedestrian elevator cores. The cost to build these spaces is projected to be at the high end of the cost range for typical underground spaces, but mined space parking offers certain long-term maintenance advantages and would add substantially to the parking capacity of the area without utilizing precious surface space. The parking/traffic report suggests that the mined space option be evaluated as an alternative to additional above-grade parking facilities south of Washington. If mined space parking is deemed feasible, the space that would have been occupied by above-grade parking could instead be developed for appropriate mixed-use development.

Bus Parking

Several proposed uses in the Historic Mills District will generate significant numbers of buses which will need layover locations until the activity in question is over. These include school, tour and charter buses attending the Mill City Museum, Guthrie Theater performances and Metrodome events. Bus layover parking cannot and should not be accommodated on city streets.

In the near-term, buses could layover in the ground level of the existing Gateway parking facility. As that facility is planned to be converted to a bus garage/maintenance facility, provision should be made for other bus layover facilities. One option that is recommended for consideration is inclusion of layover parking in the ground level of the 3rd Street and 9th Avenue Ramp and the 4th Street and McGrew Place Ramp.

Shared Parking Program

An aggressive shared parking program could minimize the total number of parking spaces needed over the 3,000 base to meet projected demand of the Mills District and surrounding area. Several opportunities for sharing parking exist in the area and should be clarified by the major generators as parking is developed. Major generators must coordinate schedules to allow shared parking to be successful.

Improved Transit

Enhancing of both fixed route and circulator operations in and around the Mills District will make transit a more viable option for certain types of trips, reducing the need for some parking.

Pedestrian Connections

The creation of well-designed, at-grade pedestrian connections throughout the Mills District, and particularly across Washington Avenue, would reduce the isolation

of remote or difficult to reach parking supplies and facilitate easier movement of people between parking and their final destinations.

Bicycle Connections

The creation of dedicated bicycle lanes in the Mills District will enhance the emerging neighborhood by creating additional connections to Downtown and the riverfront park. In addition, a functional bicycle system may reduce some trips otherwise taken by automobile, thereby reducing demand for parking.

Parking Facility Economics

Public or private parking in the Mills District area should be developed with an operational goal of economic self-sufficiency while supporting the development and needs of the community.

Parking Facility Aesthetics

Exposed facades of parking facilities should be designed to look like occupied buildings.