

# In St. Paul, a glimpse at the future of Ford site

**City planners sketched out early ideas for variety of trails, housing and transportation.**

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JIM GEHRZ • Star Tribune file Plans for the Ford site are expected to be finalized next year. “I want this to be our everything,” Mayor Chris Coleman said.

Multifamily housing, park and green space featuring a pond nearer the Mississippi River, bike and walking trails and a bustling commercial district near existing stores abutting Ford Parkway. That was the rough vision presented Monday night as a first glimpse into what redevelopment of the former Ford site in St. Paul’s Highland Park could look like, according to a presentation at the O’Shaughnessy Educational Center at the University of St. Thomas . About 400 people heard about the preliminary plan, which includes possible zoning changes and the outline of a connected transportation network on the site.

St. Paul leaders shared an idyllic vision of a bike-friendly, transit-oriented community on the 122 acres where Ford once produced cars and trucks — a community complete with a variety of jobs, housing and retail. A more detailed look at transportation to and from the site will be held next week.

“I want everything. I want this to be our everything,” St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman said of a development that could increase tax revenue by an estimated \$22 million. “But to get this right is going to take patience. It’s going to take time.”

The city will collect community input through February 2017, by holding additional meetings and through Open Saint Paul.

A formal master plan, incorporating feedback, is expected to go to the Planning Commission next spring and to City Council next summer. Final adoption is expected by late summer or early fall.

“The end goal that we are starting [Monday] is to get through City Council approval next summer,” said Jonathan Sage-Martinson, director of Planning and Economic Development. “But there will be lots of time for input and to tweak.”

Ford officials have said they plan to begin marketing the site to a master developer in late 2017 or in 2018.

“After nearly a decade of community conversations, studies, and planning, city staff has compiled that information and will put forth the first draft of a formal zoning and public realm plan,” said Council Member Chris Tolbert, who represents the area. “We still have much work to do as a community as we move toward a final plan for this amazing site on the Mississippi River and in the heart of Highland Park.”

Ford Motor Co. officials told the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in June that they expect to finish cleaning up the site — which they began in 2012 — and sell it to a developer in 2019.

The site where the assembly plant long stood is a prime piece of real estate, sandwiched among Ford Parkway, Cleveland Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard in the Highland Park neighborhood.

The site is zoned primarily for industrial use. Rezoning will be necessary for the mixed-use urban village envisioned by area residents and city leaders. City officials said rezoning will clearly identify the site’s redevelopment potential and market value to prospective buyers, as well as create more certainty of what is to come.

Much will change over the next couple of years. Still, officials said it’s an exciting new phase.

“This is just to get your imagination going,” said Merritt Clapp-Smith, principal planner.

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