

**To:** City of St. Louis Planning Commission

**From:** Don Roe, Executive Director

**Subject:** Design Downtown STL Plan – Approval to Conduct a Presentation and Public Hearing at a Future Planning Commission Meeting

**Date:** July 1, 2020

## Summary

**Submittal:** A Neighborhood Plan comprising two neighborhoods is nearing completion and will be submitted shortly to the Planning and Urban Design Agency (PDA) for review by the Planning Commission. The Design Downtown STL Plan is being prepared by Interface Studios (a Philadelphia-based firm), in partnership with Downtown STL and other local stakeholders. The planning process was initiated in June 2019 to develop a final plan that would help guide downtown over the next decade. The planning area is bounded by Cole St./Carr St. on the north, the Mississippi River on the east, Chouteau Ave. on the south, and Jefferson Ave. on the west, and includes the two neighborhoods – Downtown and Downtown West. Additionally, while this area is predominantly contained within the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward, it does include small portions of Wards 5 and 6 as well.



This resolution seeks the approval of the Planning Commission to advertise and conduct a Presentation and Public Hearing to consider the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan for the Downtown and Downtown West Neighborhoods, replacing the current Downtown Now! Action Plan.

This resolution takes no action on the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan other than requesting that the Planning Commission agrees to conduct a Presentation and Public Hearing and directs staff to fulfill the procedural requirements for the Public Hearing.

## Recommended Action

That the Planning Commission approves advertising and conducting a Presentation and Public Hearing to consider the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan at a future Planning Commission Meeting.

## 1.0 Background

In 1997, a coalition of business and civic groups united to plot out a path forward for St. Louis' downtown. When the planning process was complete in 1999, the Downtown Now! Action Plan called for \$1.1 billion in investments over the next five years in four key areas of downtown: Washington Avenue, LaClede's Landing, the Old Post Office area and the Gateway Mall corridor.

In the years since, each of the four focus areas have seen various levels of improvements: beginning with public street improvements which helped to transform the Washington Avenue Loft District from a marginally active industrial area into a thriving residential and retail destination; to the creation of Old Post Office Plaza on what used to be the site of a surface parking lot; to elevating the Gateway Mall, which now connects downtown to the arch grounds through a series of world-class designed public green spaces; and more recently to LaClede's Landing, as it shifts away from its nightlife-oriented roots to a more family-friendly neighborhood of mixed use residential and ground floor commercial.

In June 2019, St. Louis business leaders embarked on a year-long planning process with the intent for creating a road map for downtown revitalization, harkening back to the efforts of the late 1990s. According to Interface Studio, the Philadelphia-based firm leading the planning effort in partnership with Downtown STL, "if Downtown Now! was about creating the dots, Design Downtown STL is trying to connect them". The new planning process which cost approximately \$600,000 and is was funded by Downtown St. Louis Foundation Inc. creates a real opportunity to take a detailed inventory of what has been done for St. Louis' downtown, and what needs to happen next.

For the better part of a year, the planning team has led a robust effort for gathering feedback from people across the region, culminating in 130 open house participants, 96 stakeholder interviews, 1,065 collaborative map comments, 1,151 community survey responses, 520 attendees over 8 events, and in light of the COVID-19 shutdown, 582 online open house participants.

## 2.0 Public Input

Creating the opportunity for the Planning Commission to receive public input regarding the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan is the purpose of this resolution.

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## Requested Action

That the Planning Commission advertising and conducting a Presentation and Public Hearing to consider the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan at a future Planning Commission meeting.

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS PLANNING COMMISSION AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Planning Commission will conduct a Presentation and Public Hearing at a future Planning Commission meeting to seek public input regarding the adoption of the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan.

2. The Executive Director of the Planning and Urban Design Agency is hereby directed and authorized to make arrangements and the final determination as to which regular or special meeting of the Planning Commission will include the Presentation and Public Hearing, as well as a vote to adopt, modify, or reject the Design Downtown STL Plan as a Neighborhood Plan.
3. The Executive Director of the Planning and Urban Design Agency is hereby directed to follow the rules regarding the provision of public notice for the Presentation and Public Hearing, as set forth in Ordinance 64687.