

To: Minneapolis City Council
Minneapolis Public Works

From: Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Date: February 3, 2016

Subject: Pedestrian Oriented Overlay Districts

Pedestrian Oriented Overlay Districts

Background:

Minneapolis currently has over 20 Pedestrian Oriented Overlay Districts. Overlay zoning districts are used to resource protection or development guidelines. The PO Overlay Districts center on commercial areas with high pedestrian activity and contain building design guidelines and restrictions to promote street life, mitigate parking impacts, and prohibit certain automobile-focused uses.

Recommendation of the PAC:

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee recommends city leadership and planning staff expand the scope and guidelines of Pedestrian Oriented Overlay Districts to improve walkability and pedestrian safety across the city.

The PAC encourages staff to explore all of the following:

- Increasing the number of PO Overlay Districts - there are many small and medium-sized commercial or heavily-pedestrianized areas of the city not currently covered by PO Overlays. In addition, the city should consider closing racial, income, and geographic equity gaps when expanding the number of districts.
- Expand the size of existing districts - many current districts do not reflect boundaries of activity areas, transit walk-sheds, or future dense residential and commercial uses given recent construction and market trends.
- Strengthen the scope of design requirements, guidelines, and restrictions - consider extending certain guidelines and restrictions found in specific districts today to all PO Overlay Districts, as well as explore new guidelines. Examples include a minimum floor area ratio, maximum parking requirements, curb cut limitations, etc.
- Consider tying PO Overlay District locations to externally-defined areas - Minneapolis recently reduced parking requirements along high-frequency transit corridors. A similar definition could be used for PO Overlays in the long-term to avoid confusion and more easily adapt to the city as land uses change with transportation investments.
- Consider walking as transit, and build walkability to places that now lack pedestrian access.
- Extend PO Overlay Districts to all Pedestrian Priority Corridors, and make a FAR of 1 standard for all Districts.
- Emphasize the pedestrian experience along these corridors.
- Compare the advantages of zoning changes instead of the use of PO Overlay Districts.

The PAC is excited to work with the city in defining these changes and giving feedback throughout the process.