**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 1, 2014

**TO:** Planning Commissioners

**FROM:** John Judd, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** Report from Planning Department Staff, regarding

The recommendations in the Park Point Small Area Plan.

The February 11, 2014 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission tabled until April’s planning commission meeting the decision on the recommendations contained in the Park Point Small Area Plan (Plan). This was done in order to allow Staff and the sub-committee of the Planning Commission to conduct additional research to address two minority reports from the Plan Committee, the Commission member’s questions and additional concerns expressed by residents.

This also provided staff with an opportunity to meet with the Canal Park Business Association, and at their regular March meeting present and discuss how the Canal Park area might be impacted by some of the proposed recommendations included in the Park Point Small Area Plan. That meeting took place on March 20th.

During this hiatus, planning staff consulted with Councilor Gardner, the members of Commission appointed sub-committee, the City traffic engineering department, the Duluth **Parking** Commission and the private consulting engineer from SEH who conducted the Park Point traffic alignment alternatives and traffic study.

At these meetings we addressed the elements of the Plan recommendations that appeared to be the most controversial with some of the Canal Park residents, as well as members of the Planning Commission. We re-examined the future impact of the movement of the “S” curve on the neighborhood (including Canal Park). We also reviewed the effect of proposed improvements along Minnesota Avenue on adjacent properties and the access and flow of bike and pedestrian as well as vehicle traffic. In addition, we revisited the Two Tier Public Park improvement concept and access recommendations including the opening up of existing Rights-of-Way (R-O-W) and the consideration of future concurrent use permit or vacation applications.

We have concluded that the Plan’s recommendations Goal 4, regarding short, intermediate and long range changes to the Bike, Pedestrian and Vehicular traffic alignments will result in safer access to, and utility, of the improved and natural public facilities on Park Point for both the resident and the visitor. (Please see attached Memorandum from Matt Bolf/SHE dated March 31, 2014) Also, with the inclusion of the minority reports, the Plan Committee also supported these recommendations.

The other major point of contention was Goal 5 of the Plan, to define public access/use of improved and unimproved R-O-W and Street-Ends. The Plans recommendations were modified rather than declare specific street ends as “vacatable” to note that they would be Subject to Further Research (STFR) if a change in their status was proposed in the future. Also, in order to encourage and support the enforcement of Park regulations all along the Park Point, where feasible, designated, controlled and enforced parking facilities are now included in the recommendations for Tier 2 access points.

**Alternative 3**

(Please see attached illustration)

If the relocation of the “S” curve, as well as the one-way pairs, alternative is rejected by the City Council the City Staff are recommending the following alternatives for vehicular traffic patterns and Bike/Pedestrian circulation

A. Due to current and future development in the area, during the summer months, parking would only be allowed on the Lake (East) side of Lake and Minnesota Avenues. This would greatly improve the sightlines for vehicles leaving the facilities on the Bayside of Minnesota Avenue and those moving from Minnesota Avenue via 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Streets onto Lake Avenue by turning left (North) towards Canal Park.

B. Bikes and Pedestrians crossing the lift bridge would have the option of staying on the west side of Lake Avenue until they reach the intersection at 13th Street and Minnesota Avenue, at which point they can continue South on Minnesota Avenue or enter the Bayside of Franklin Park to the intersection of 13th street and the proposed new Bike/Pedestrian trail extending to 19th Street, located within the existing St. Louis Avenue easement. Curb extensions (bump outs) would be on both sides of Minnesota Avenue at the 13th Street intersection along with user activated crossing signs. The curb extension would provide shorter crossing distance and improving sight distance which places pedestrians in a position to better view motorists and vice-versa.

C. The area around the controlled intersection of 19th Street, Minnesota Avenue and St. Louis Avenue includes Tier 2 access points to the Lake and Bay as well as the Sand Point bird observation area. Traffic counts reveal a nearly 50% decrease in vehicles continuing south on Minnesota Avenue from 19th Street and it is therefore an safer point to reintroduce Bikes and Pedestrians to Lake Avenue.

D. For vehicular traffic, after crossing the bridge, a right hand turn lane and signage would lead traffic onto 8th Street and down (West) to its intersection with Minnesota Avenue. In an effort to address the needs of all user groups, 8th Street from Lake Avenue to Minnesota Avenue and Minnesota Avenue from 8th Street to 13th Street, under this scenario, incorporates the “complete streets” concept.

E. The typical section used for 8th Street from Lake Avenue to Minnesota Avenue from the North to the South side of the right-of-way (R-O-W) includes an 8-foot bike /pedestrian path, a 2-foot reaction shoulder to protect the path from the two 13-foot driving through lanes, and an 8- foot parking lane which includes a 2-foot reaction shoulder. This results in a total pavement width of 44 feet including the reaction shoulders and bike /pedestrian path.

F. The section design for Minnesota Avenue from 8th Street, within the existing easement, north to the end of R-O-W, would include a 20- foot vehicle access to the homes and hotel. On the Bayside of the R-O-W, an 8-foot bike /pedestrian path, public parking and enhanced access to the Bayshore would be included. The bike /pedestrian path would continue from the end of the R-O-W to lift bridge south pier. The area between lift bridge south pier and the Corps of Engineers property will be designated a Tier 2 access point and recreation area.

G. The typical section used for Minnesota Avenue from 8th Street South to 13th Street, moving from the from West (Bayside) to the East (Lakeside) of the R-O-W, includes an 8-foot bike /pedestrian path (the extension of the path running north), a 2-foot reaction shoulder to protect the path from the two 13-foot driving through lanes, and an 8- foot parking lane which includes a 2-foot reaction shoulder. This also results in a total pavement width of 44 feet including the reaction shoulders and bike / pedestrian path.