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To: Saint Paul Planning Commission

From: Neighborhood Planning Committee

RE: The Campus Boundaries Zoning Study

Background

The purpose of this memo is to convey the findings and recommendations of the Campus Boundaries Zoning Study.

Over the past several years, a large number of single-family residential properties have been acquired by institutions of higher education in Saint Paul. Some of these have been demolished and left as empty lots. The institutions undertaking these actions have done so in the absence of a clear plan for campus growth. This has raised substantial public concern over the potential for damage to the character and vitality of the residential neighborhoods surrounding these campuses.

The Saint Paul Zoning Code requires a conditional use permit for colleges, universities, and seminaries when they are located in residential districts. Sec. 65.220 of the Zoning Code lists standards and conditions for these institutions, and requires establishment of a defined campus boundary in residential districts and Planning Commission approval of any expansion of those campus boundaries.

Campuses include a wide variety of uses, some of which have the potential to be incompatible with adjacent residential uses. The requirement for a conditional use permit defining campus boundaries allows the Planning Commission to evaluate proposed campus expansions and permit expansions only under such conditions as they will not have a substantial negative impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Findings

Patterns of streets and public realm, lot size and configuration, and building massing and design are significant contributors to neighborhood character. Patterns of use—how many people live, work, or recreate in an area, how and when they move between locations—also matter. When these patterns change substantially, so too does the character of a neighborhood. Change may occur in large increments over short periods of time, or may occur more gradually. While planning efforts to understand and appropriately mitigate the impacts of large magnitude changes

are common, it is more difficult to understand and anticipate the cumulative impact of more incremental changes over longer periods of time.

The intent of the Zoning Code is, among other things, to regulate the location, alteration, and use of buildings and land and to encourage a compatible mix of land uses that reflects the scale, character, and urban design of Saint Paul's neighborhoods. Sec. 65.220 provides for regulation of the expansion of college, university, and seminary campus boundaries through a conditional use permit. In doing so, it provides adequate tools for the City to manage how associated changes to a neighborhood—such as the introduction of larger structures or changes in traffic patterns—impact the character of that neighborhood. However, Sec. 65.220 as currently written is less effective in managing the smaller, more incremental changes associated with the actions of institutions in regard to their long-term development plans. This is particularly true with regard to the purchase and demolition by institutions of single-family and duplex properties at the margins of their campuses.

Because campus expansions in residential districts generally require the institution to acquire and assemble a number of residential properties, it is common for colleges and universities to acquire individual properties as they become available. To reduce holding costs and because properties not yet within campus boundaries can generally only be used for residential purposes, institutions may demolish structures and maintain the properties as vacant lots until sufficient land to accommodate expansion plans can be acquired.

The demolition of residential properties without replacement of the structures causes damage to both the physical and social fabric of neighborhoods. With large numbers of demolitions, these negative impacts can be substantial. However, Sec. 65.220 currently does not address institutional acquisition and demolition of residential properties except as a condition of approval of a conditional use permit for campus expansion. And because an applicant must have an ownership interest to seek a conditional use permit, institutions generally don't seek approval for campus expansion until after they have acquired the properties for expansion. As a result, the ordinance as currently structured does not adequately protect neighborhoods from impacts associated with campus expansion.

Recommendations

City regulation of campus boundaries should continue to allow for appropriate and carefully-planned campus expansion. It should also better protect neighborhoods from the negative impacts of pre-expansion acquisition and demolition of residential properties near campuses. This can be achieved by restricting the addition to campuses of properties where the primary residential structure was recently demolished. Such a restriction would provide an incentive to institutions to maintain acquired residential properties in residential use, thereby maintaining the neighborhood fabric, until such time as a campus expansion were approved through the issuance of a conditional use permit by the Planning Commission. As a standard tied to a conditional use, the Planning Commission would also have the ability to ease the restriction in cases where it caused undue hardship.

Sec. 65.220 of the Zoning Code is shown below, with language inserted that prohibits the addition of any property to a campus if the primary residential structure on the property has been demolished with the past ten years:

Sec. 65.220. - College, university, seminary, or similar institution of higher learning.

An institution for post-secondary education, public or private, offering courses in general, technical, or religious education and not operated for profit, which operates in buildings owned or leased by the institution for administrative and faculty offices, classrooms, laboratories, chapels, auditoriums, lecture halls, libraries, student and faculty centers, athletic facilities, dormitories, fraternities, and sororities, but not including colleges or trade schools operated for profit.

Standards and conditions except in B4—B5 business districts:

(a) When an institution is established, it shall provide the minimum number of off-street parking spaces required by this code. The institution shall be required to provide additional parking spaces only when the minimum number of parking spaces will have to be increased due to a more than ten (10) percent or three hundred (300) gain in the total number of employees, staff and students, whichever is less. Thereafter, additional parking spaces will have to be provided for each subsequent gain of more than ten (10) percent or three hundred (300) in the total number of employees, staff or students. To determine compliance with parking requirements in, the institution must file an annual report with the planning administrator stating the number of employees, staff and students associated with the institution.

(b) A theater, auditorium or sports arena located on a college, university or seminary campus must provide off-street parking within six hundred (600) feet of the building to be served as measured from a principal entrance to the building to the nearest point of the off-street parking facility, and also provide the number of parking spaces specified in section 63.200. The planning commission, after public hearing, may determine that the existing parking provided by the institution for students, employees and dormitory beds meets this parking requirement based upon the following:

(1) The spaces are within six hundred (600) feet of the building they are intended to serve, as measured from a principal entrance to the building to the nearest point of the off-street parking lot; and

(2) It can be demonstrated by the institution that the spaces are not needed by students and employees during times when events attracting nonstudents and nonemployees are to be held.

Additional standards and conditions in residential districts:

(c) The campus boundary as defined under subparagraph (f) below at some point shall be adjacent to a major thoroughfare as designated on the major thoroughfare plan.

(d) Buildings shall be set back a minimum of fifty (50) feet from every property line, plus an additional two (2) feet for every foot the building's height exceeds fifty (50) feet.

(e) On a campus of five (5) acres or more, no building shall exceed ninety (90) feet in height; on a campus smaller than five (5) acres, no building shall exceed forty (40) feet in height.

(f) The boundaries of the institution shall be as defined in the permit, and may not be expanded without the prior approval of the planning commission, as evidenced by an amended conditional use permit. <u>Properties on which the primary structure has been demolished within the past ten (10) years shall not be eligible for inclusion in a college, university, or seminary boundary.</u> The campus that is defined by the

boundaries shall be a minimum of three (3) acres, and all property within the campus boundaries must be contiguous.

The applicant shall submit an "anticipated growth and development statement" for approval of a new or expanded campus boundary, which statement shall include but not be limited to the following elements:

(1) Proposed new boundary or boundary expansion.

(2) Enrollment growth plans that include planned or anticipated maximum enrollment by major category (full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate) over the next ten (10) years and also the anticipated maximum enrollment over the next twenty (20) years.

(3) Plans for parking facilities over the next ten (10) years, including potential locations and approximate time of development.

(4) Plans for the provision of additional student housing, either on-campus or off-campus in college-controlled housing.

(5) Plans for use of land and buildings, new construction and changes affecting major open space.

(6) An analysis of the effect this expansion (or new campus) will have on the economic, social and physical well-being of the surrounding neighborhood, and how the expansion (or new campus) will benefit the broader community.

Approval of a new or expanded campus boundary shall be based on an evaluation using the general standards for conditional uses found in section 61.500, and the following criteria:

(i) Anticipated undergraduate student enrollment growth is supported by plans for student housing that can be expected to prevent excessive increase in student housing demand in residential neighborhoods adjacent to the campus.

(ii) Potential parking sites identified in the plan are generally acceptable in terms of possible access points and anticipated traffic flows on adjacent streets.

(iii) Plans for building construction and maintenance of major open space areas indicate a sensitivity to adjacent development by maintaining or providing adequate and appropriately located open space.

(iv) The proposed new or expanded boundary and the "anticipated growth and development statement" are not in conflict with the city's comprehensive plan.

(g) The institution shall not exceed by more than ten (10) percent or three hundred (300), whichever is less, the student enrollment, staff and employee size and/or dormitory bed levels identified in the permit unless required off-street parking is provided and approved by the commission.

REQUESTED ACTION

Release the findings and recommendations of the Campus Boundaries Zoning Study for public review and set a public hearing before the Planning Commission for August 7, 2015.