

TO: Tia Anderson, PED Zoning Committee
Members of the Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission

FROM: Anne Geisser

DATE: November 17, 2020

RE: Appeal of Final Site Plan Approval for 1769 Grand Avenue

As the appellant in this case, you have received a copy of my appeal to the final site plan approval of 1769 Grand Avenue. Therefore, in this letter, I will discuss issues of concern found in this proposal.

Many of the land use policies included in the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Macalester-Groveland Community Plan are not adhered to in this project .

A major issue that is stated for any new development to follow is in the Macalester-Groveland Plan (LU1.2). "Maintain and/or establish zoning that encourages higher-density (taller) development at the intersection of mixed-use corridors and lower-density (shorter) development at mid-block of mixed-use corridors." The District refers to this as infill housing. The objective of infill or "middle housing" as it is referred to in the City's Comprehensive Plan 2040 is to fit into the block it wants to join and not to disrupt it. This proposed building is not consistent with the look of this block. It is very clear in reading the zoning code and the District's own plans as it pertains to infill housing that any new development should conform and fit into its current character. Yet it is this proposed building that will drastically change both the livability and the look and feel of this block on Grand Avenue...and not in a positive way.

Further in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Policy LU-29, in the Mixed Use section, sums up this issue by stating: "Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition to those permitted in adjoining districts."

This seems to explain why the applicants' proposal is not appropriate for the space in which they want to build. Good Timing asserts that their building will fit in with the other buildings on the block. In fact, the opposite is true. The design and size overwhelm the apartments on each side as well as the houses on Summit Avenue.

The issue that everyone seems to be talking about is density. It is apparent to all who know this area are aware that Grand Avenue is already dense with multi-unit structures on almost every block on Grand. Also, there are no structures anywhere on that block or in the area or almost the entirety of Grand Avenue that are higher than three stories. That appears to be by design over the many years that new multi-unit apartments have been added to the Avenue. To change that traditional look, there should be an overriding argument as to how that change will benefit the area or will it change the character so much that it totally alters the atmosphere that people, already living there, want.

Good Timing is applying for permission to come into our neighborhood without trying to fit into the space they have selected. This neighborhood includes Summit Avenue since we share an alley which is an important thoroughfare for both sides of the alley. Summit Avenue is part of a historic district in the City and is required to follow certain guidelines regarding the appearance of their homes and property. However, the owners of Good Timing do not see this street as part of their neighborhood. But it is.

We share the alley and that connects us. This 12 unit building is not like the other multi-unit apartments on the north side of the block because those apartments consist primarily of studio and one-bedroom units with some two bedroom units. The proposed building will have 43 bedrooms which means at least 43 persons living there. This site and this block and this neighborhood cannot handle that large an influx of people into this area.

Further the calculations that were used to determine the requested variances were based on 12 units. However that is not the correct number to be used in setting such items as parking. In these 12 units will be 43 bedrooms—each unit consisting of 3 or 4 bedrooms. That is far more than any of the other apartments on the north side of the block. Based on the design of the individual units, more than one person could be sleeping per room thereby increasing the occupancy to over 43. This area has colleges nearby so the likelihood is that students will be the major tenants as is reflected in the other apartments on the block. The concept for this building is merely a cut above a boarding house or a single room occupancy with adults sharing a kitchen. This model will likely lead to short term residencies with minimal connection to the neighborhood or concern about the building itself.

I will conclude with a very important concern and that is the owner's response to the six Findings by which the Board of Zoning Appeals made its recommendation to deny their project as presented. While the motion itself only mentioned one, specifically, No. 4, there was a full discussion on all of them.

Finding No.2: The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

In the sections on Land Use and Housing from the Macalester-Groveland Comprehensive Plan the applicant's proposal really isn't consistent with its policy.

In their housing section, the District Council says any new construction is to preserve the traditional aesthetic appearance and appeal of the neighborhood with appropriate scale and mass to the surrounding buildings.

To preserve the well-kept traditional feel and scale of the neighborhood.

While they encourage higher density (taller) development at the intersections of mixed-use corridors, they support lower density (shorter) development at mid-block in these corridors.

These words from their Comprehensive Plan indicate support for new and improved development but with conditions that conform and enhance the neighborhood. This proposal does not do this.

No.3: Applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision and that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision.

No. 4: The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.

No. 6: The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

The plight of the landowner has been created by himself. He bought this property with a duplex on it that has been there since 1916. Now he claims that it can't be repaired and that in its place he must have a 50 Foot, 5 story building that is entirely too large for the space of this lot which is 50 feet wide by 201 feet in length. This is a problem of his own making. He

could fix the duplex or he could build something smaller which would fit that lot without requiring a variance.

Further, it is very obvious that these variances will alter the character and feel of Grand Avenue and more specifically that block.

In sum, a project of this size is not suitable and comparable for the space. It will totally disrupt its housing neighbors as well as the tenants in the adjoining buildings. The design and size do not fit with the current appearance and feel of Grand Avenue and as an infill structure it must conform to what is already in place and in accordance with the District's own plans.



Re: Appeal of Final Site Plan Approval for 1769 Grand Avenue
Project: SPR20-024076

Position Statement of SARPA in support of the Anne Geisser Appeal.

The Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA) is dedicated to the preservation of the historic, residential, and urban park character of Saint Paul's historic Summit Avenue. The SARPA board of directors has approved the support of the above appeal:

SARPA supports the above referenced appeal and requests that the Planning Commission reverse the decision below and deny the Site Plan Application.

SARPA feels it is appropriate to express its concerns regarding this project for two basic reasons. First, this project will have an impact on Summit Avenue as discussed below. Second, SARPA believes that permitting this project would be a manifestation of a serious disregard for the important community and historic district plans that govern (or legally ought to govern) this development. Such disregard affects us all—Summit Avenue included.

The proposed project's impact on Summit Avenue flows directly from its size and scale. It will be a five story (50 foot) tall building which is much taller than surrounding buildings and is wedged into a lot that even the developer admits is "small relative to the neighborhood properties and many other RM2 parcels throughout the city." It is inevitable that because of its height the building will be visible from Summit Avenue. Its extreme height will dwarf the Summit Avenue homes immediately to

the North with which it shares an alley and it will reduce air flow, green space and access to the sun for all residents. It apparently will have 43 bedroom units with only 12 parking spaces. Notwithstanding all optimism concerning alternative transportation options the occupants of the building will inevitably require more parking than that. The overflow will spill onto neighboring streets.

Second, approval of this project shows a serious disregard for the goals outlined in the Macalester-Groveland Community Plan. By way of specific example, Section 1.2 of the Land Use portion of the Plan clearly states the goal to: "Maintain and/or enhance density (taller) development at the intersection of mixed-use corridors and lower density (shorter) development at mid-block of mixed use corridors". The siting of this extremely tall building in the middle of the block is plainly contrary to this important goal. Moreover, as noted above this project affects Summit Avenue which implicates the West Summit Avenue Historic District designation. Not only does this project fail to adhere to the scale, character, and community fabric of the section of Grand Avenue where it would sit, it also fails to adhere to the scale, character, and community fabric of the surrounding area including Summit Avenue.

For the above reasons, among others, SARPA supports the above referenced appeal and requests that the Planning Commission reverse the decision below and deny the Site Plan Application.

Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association

By its Interim President /s/ Wendy Caucutt

and its Board Members /ss/ Katherine Cairns, Thomas Darling, Francis Luikart, J. Gray Quale, Harry Walsh, and Carolyn Will



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November 13, 2020

City of Saint Paul Zoning Committee

Members of the Zoning Committee:

On April 22nd, the Housing and Land Use Committee (“HLU”) of the Macalester Groveland Community Council (“MGCC”) held a public eMeeting via Zoom, at which it considered the application for three variances (Reference No. 20-024086), concerning the property located at 1769 Grand Avenue. The applicant appeared to speak to the application and to answer questions.

Prior to the meeting, the HLU received six letters that detailed the opinions of 18 neighbors and one neighborhood organization in opposition of the application and did not receive any comments in support. Furthermore, 25 neighbors attended the eMeeting, with 1 neighbor speaking in opposition to the application and 1 neighbor speaking in support of the application.

After speaking with the applicant, considering neighborhood feedback, consulting the Macalester Groveland Long Range plan, and assessing the merits of the application, the HLU passed the following resolution by a final vote of 12-4-0:

**** The Housing and Land Use Committee of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council recommends approval of the three (3) requested variances: (1) lot size variance of 634 sq. ft. per unit, (2) side yard setback variance of 3 ft per side, (3) and off-street parking space variance of 7 parking spaces, for the property at 1769 Grand Avenue, Reference No. 20-024086. ****

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Alexa Golemo
Executive Director
Macalester-Groveland Community Council

cc (via email): Ward 3, City of Saint Paul

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: robert schestak <rschestak@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 11:31 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Zoning Committee meeting Nov. 19, 2020

Re: Item 20-086-348: Grand Avenue A[artments

As Summit Avenue neighbors of the proposed development of the property at 1769 Grand Avenue, we support the appeal of Anne Geisser challenging the ruling of the St. Paul City Council approving, on June 3, 2020, the scope and size, including variances, of this project after the Board of Zoning Appeals denied the variances on April 27, 2020.

This development is oversized for the lot, taller than the adjacent buildings on the block and promises to house a substantial number of residents. There is already overuse of the alley with the traffic and trash collection associated with the existing apartment buildings although tolerable. The density of the new apartment will strain services and increase congestion and noise (We assume a project of this size and configuration would be developed mostly for students, not families as stated.)

We do not object to the development of this site but request that the project be scaled back to conform with the neighborhood, including variances.

As a historical note, the property immediately across the alley from 1769 Grand was the Minnesota home of Hubert H. Humphrey when he was the Vice President of the United States. It would be a shame to erect such a gross commercial monument to overshadow his Summit property.

Robert J. Schestak
Mari Lyn C. Ampe
1788 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: Paul Padratzik <padratzik@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 10:47 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: 1769 Grand Avenue Appeal Project: SPR20-024076

Dear Mr. Diatta and Members of the Planning Commission:

I am writing in support of the appeal of the final site plan approval granted to the proposed Grand Avenue Apartments project at 1769 Grand Avenue. Let me begin by saying we are in support of the development for this property, if it stays within the size and aesthetics of the neighborhood. That being said there is already concerns with Good Timing's ability to develop and manage the property.

The following are examples of neglect by the management.

This Spring the grass was not cut until after June 3rd when the attached pictures were taken. In spots it was over 12" tall and has gone to seed.





The proposed buildings exterior materials are not of or like the historic nature of the surrounding buildings or neighborhood.

From the Site Plan. The trash enclosure is completely inadequate for a 12-unit 43 bedroom apartment building. Upon investigating and speaking with two different waste management companies they indicated that the 7 foot by 12-foot enclosure would be extremely tight for two 4 yard containers on wheels. Note there is not enough room in the proposed parking lot to accommodate a trash truck to pull in thus the containers will have to be loaded in the alley. Both waste management companies indicated it would take both of these containers to accommodate a once a week pick up schedule based on 43+ residents. **The site plan does not accommodate any space for recycling containers in the trash enclosure.**

In comparison the Apartments at 1759 Grans Ave have 18 Units and only 29 Bedrooms. On a weekly basis it utilizes a single four-yard waste container plus six recycling containers



With 43+ Residents at 1769 Grand Ave. data would show an additional 10 – 12 recycle containers would be required, of which have not been incorporated into the trash enclosure.

This is another example of how this project is out of scale with the rest of the properties on the block. The proposed property at 1769 Grand will not be able to accommodate the waste and recycling containers necessary for a 43 bedroom building. It would be a nuisance and taxing on condition of the alley if the Good Timing was allowed to increase the frequency of waste and recycling pick up beyond once a week.

I am also concerned about the nuisance created by additional equipment necessary for seasonal snow removal. Site Plan does not accommodate any significant snow storage on site.

As indicated, I am for the construction of a new multi-family dwelling that will have similar density and scale with the rest of the properties on the block. As proposed this project is both an outlier with regards to the number of residents and scale of the building. All of which is a self-created plight of the land owner and developer.

My request is the appeal put forth by Anne Geisser is approved and the land owner developer is required to submit a new plan that is within scale and density of the surrounding buildings.

Sincerely,

Paul Padratzik
1760 Summit Ave

Saint Paul Planning Commission, Zoning Committee
15 Kellogg Boulevard West
Saint Paul, MN 55102

November 16, 2020

Re: Appeal of Zoning decision for 1769 Grand Ave, St Paul, MN 55105

Dear Committee Members,

We are home owners at 1750 Summit Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55105. We have lived in our home for 10 years. We have been residents of St Paul for 15-20 years. We ask you to overturn the approval of the variance.

As you are aware, the committee originally heard Good Timing's presentation and the neighbor's comments regarding the requested variances. They recommended to the City Council to deny the variances. The City Council did not hold a public meeting. They only allowed residents to present their comments in writing. I received no confirmation that my email/letter was received. I received no comments or information as to why the City Council chose to go against recommendations and against the recommendations of the taxpayer's directly impacted by this project.

Good Timing has done nothing to listen to the neighbors concerns or incorporate their feedback in to the design of the building. Not even changing the look and feel of the building to better match or blend to the area. So far, they are not acting like good neighbors.

We have nothing against development of the site or for an apartment building to be built there. Our concerns about the site plan are purely in interest of protecting our family, our enjoyment in our home and property, and our investment. We feel the increase of population to the block will be substantial and is unnecessary. Good Timing can design an apartment building more suited for the size of the lot.

Our concerns are at follows.

Parking

We disagree that the variance was accepted allowing this building with 43 bedrooms to have only 12 parking spots. Although we understand that the intention is for home owners/renters to not have cars and to walk or take public transportation, it is unrealistic.

- Melinda grew up in the Twin Cities and has lived in St Paul almost half her life since attending college at Hamline University. And, only knows 3 people/families that try not to use cars. And, all three still own a car and still have times when they need to use it. And, these 3 families are a very small percentage of all the people I know.
- Households in St Paul, MN have an average number of 2 cars. That is potentially 24 cars.
- Admission information for St Thomas University shows that 41% of students living on campus have cars. We would imagine that the percentage increases for those living off campus. That would be at least 18 cars if one student per bedroom.
- Although we have walked to the grocery store. It is 1 mile from our location. It's not realistic with multiple bags or during winter. We daily walk Summit Ave and very rarely see someone walking with a grocery bag. Although they are on a bus route, it is unrealistic that they will always be able to take the bus. Or, depending on the person, maybe never.

- Where are all of these additional cars going to park? We already have occasional overnight parking in front of our house, leaving his car there for days at a time, from people that live behind us on Grand Ave. Unfortunately, they often park very close to our driveway which makes it difficult pulling in and out of our driveway. It is difficult to see oncoming bicycles, cars, and runners. Right now, the regulations for parking on Summit state that they can't be there longer than 24 hours. If this variance proceeds, we will request the parking regulation to be modified to a shorter period of time.

What Good Timing should be designing is adequate parking stalls with electric charging stations, if they are attempting to be green and progressive.

Character of Summit Ave., Grand Ave. and Mac Groveland is important!

The building as designed looks like it should be standing on Snelling and Selby Ave. It does not look like an apartment building in an old, historic neighborhood. If allowed to continue as designed, it becomes a footprint for future projects. The character of our neighborhood will sadly change.

- The building is visually different. It is very dark instead of using a brick more similar to their neighbors.
- The building will stand 2 stories higher than any building in the surrounding area. Possibly even in Mac Groveland in it's entirety. (We were unable to find any 5 story buildings here.) We are not downtown. Although I understand that the height of the building is within zoning code, there have been plenty of restrictions granted within Mac Groveland about new buildings that tower over their neighbors. They will block our light and negatively impact the enjoyment of our property. We enjoy and intentionally purchased a home with a south-facing sunny backyard.
- Because they are squashing this building in to a small lot, there is very little green space. All along Grand Ave you see the more typical brick brownstone looking apartment building with a nice small yard in front. Of which, it is very typical to see tenants enjoying the property. And, it just provides that neighborhood feel making it consistent with the homes along Grand Ave, as well.
- Although I understand Grand Ave. is not specifically covered in the Historical regulations, it is a historical area. And directly abuts it. We just spent over \$40,000 replacing and repairing brickwork on our property to maintain the historical character. And now, you are allowing a modern tower to be built behind us within view from our home and yard? That seems grossly unfair and does not seem to protect our investment or the property values of the neighborhood.
- The zoning plans have numerous statements about a building fitting in to the surrounding of it's neighbors. This building certainly does not.

Noise & other issues

When we purchased the home, we knew there was an apartment building behind us. However, we did not fully understand what it would be like to live in a home with single pane glass and little to no insulation to buffer us from it.

- Several times a week, we are woken in the middle of the night by someone's car alarm. How long will that car alarm be going off for if the car is parked on Summit Ave and the tenant lives on Grand? Who do I call about it? The police? Maybe there needs to be no overnight parking allowed at all on Summit Ave?

- When playing in my backyard with my young children, we can smell the cigarette of the gentleman smoking in the parking lot behind my house. Although, there is nothing to be done about this, our concern is the increased number of people.
- We can hear radios of cars when they pull up or someone talking on their cell phone from within our house with windows and doors closed. Our concern is the number of people in the building adds to the number of people that might be standing out back.

Thank you in advance for considering our concerns. We respectfully ask you to help us to get the modifications to this project to make it a better fit for the neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Melinda & Naji AlJabry
1750 Summit Ave., St Paul, MN 55105

From: Catherine Messina <catherinemessina9@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 5:57 PM
To: Anderson, Tia (CI-StPaul) <Tia.Anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Re: Appeal of Final Site Plan Approval for 1769 Grand Avenue

Hi Ms. Anderson -

I am writing to let you know that we are against this project. It does not fit in the neighborhood, and will bring in too much traffic to an already congested alley. We support the appeal. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Richard and Catherine Messina
1774 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105