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February 9, 2021

Zoning Committee of the Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Council Chambers
3rd Floor, City Hall
City of Saint Paul
VIA EMAIL

To Whom It May Concern:

On January 27th, 2021, 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 a conditional use permit for 69’ 6” building height, a variance for front yard setback, and variance for rear yard setback (Reference No. 21-225-115), concerning the properties located at 1074-1096 James Avenue. At the time of this meeting, the application did not include variances for the west and east side yard setbacks. The applicant appeared to speak to the application and to answer questions.

Prior to the meeting, MGCC did not receive any letters in support or opposition to the application. Furthermore, 11 neighbors attended the public meeting but none spoke in favor or in opposition to 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 12-5, with 3 abstentions.

***** The Housing and Land Use Committee of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council recommends approval of the variance for front yard setback, variance for rear yard setback, and Conditional Use Permit for a height of 69’ 6” for the properties at 1074-1096 James Avenue. *****

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
Chet Funk, Majority property owner & Applicant

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: Drew Nelson <dwnels83@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 10:33 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Cc: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: James Ave Apartments - CUP/Variances

Good morning Mike, PED Zoning Committee-

My name is Drew Nelson, and I'm a residential rep on the MacGrove Community Council Board of Directors and a member of the Housing and Land Use Committee. I'm writing to express my support for the CUP and variances requested by the developer on behalf of this project, and to remind of the support from the MGCC HLU: we voted overwhelmingly in favor of this project.

From my view, this is an amazing opportunity to add housing - including affordable housing - to an area of the city basically directly identified in our city's 2040 plan. This neighborhood has good transit, is highly walkable and fairly bikeable, has services including grocery/restaurants within a few hundred feet, and even has solid commuter vehicle access. The suggestion that a building of this height is out of character for the neighborhood is baffling to me frankly, as Montcalm apartments - which is taller itself, has more units, and is built on a hill making it appear even taller from the sidewalk/pedestrian POV - is 800 feet away from the site. Even the 3 story apartments on the SW corner of Randolph and Lex are nearly the same height to the sidewalk as the project, since they are built up on the hill. (I'm also aware that Montcalm is RM3 zoned, however I believe RM3 has the same height max as RM2 - so a request would have been needed no matter which zoning these properties were rezoned to.)

I'd also like to convey how engaged the developer, Chet Funk, has been in this project. From the rezoning of the site through passage at the HLU, Chet has met with the MGCC 6+ times, fliered the neighborhood to drive engagement in the project, and been highly responsive by all accounts to the community members who've chosen to engage with this. Frankly, if his approach was the model for all developers in StP, we'd be better off and have even more neighborhood and community-oriented projects.

I'd encourage the committee to please support the request of the community, the MGCC, and the developers to allow the CUP/variances, and help us to welcome new neighbors to MacGrove!

Thank you for your time-

Drew Nelson
1407 Palace Ave

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: Garth Hickle <garththickle@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 12:01 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Support for project at 1074 – 1096 James Ave

Dear Zoning Committee:

I am writing to offer my support of the proposed project at 1075-1076 James Avenue in St. Paul.

This is an important project for the city and aligns with the city's goals for increased density and affordable housing.

Thank you.

Regards.

Garth

Garth Hickle
2087 Bayard Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55116

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: Mauricio Ochoa <mauricio.j.ochoa@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 11:59 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Support of the Building at James & Lexington

Hello!

My name is Mauricio Ochoa and I live at 1239 Thomas Avenue. I am writing in support of the project at James Ave and Lexington Ave as it furthers Saint Paul's goals of building compact urban development centered around transit and in close proximity to neighborhood nodes. Although not explicitly identified as a Node in the 2040 plan, the corner of Randolph and Lexington is a growing mixed-use center with similarly sized buildings in close vicinity.

I would, however, strongly encourage Staff, the Planning Commission, and the Developer to provide biking facilities commensurate to those given to automobile drivers. There are two levels fully dedicated to car parking, while the meager 456 SF dedicated to bike parking is certainly not enough for 91 units. With the construction of the Ayd Mill Road Bikeway and bike lanes on Lexington Avenue, this intersection can be more people-centric, instead of car-oriented. Why do we need more car storage spaces than there are units in the building?

Thanks for your consideration.

February 10, 2021

Dear Honorable Members of The St. Paul Planning Commission,

Thank you for your courage to serve on this Committee. My words are my own today. My testimony is informed by eight years on the Board of Macalester Groveland District Council (MGCC) and six years representing the Council at the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC).

I ask you to approve the CUP and Variances for 1074-1096 James Avenue. St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and our city's leaders had the foresight to provide the 2040 Comprehensive Plan to guide all of us. The Plan requires us to face who bore past **opportunity costs**. The decision you, the **Planning Commission**, makes today will inform the meaning of our first Core Value, **Equity** and **Opportunity**.

Equity is a word with two meanings:

1. *Equity*

the quality of being fair and impartial.

Similar words: Fairness, Justice, Fair play

2. *Equity*

the value of the shares issued by a company.

Similar words: Value, Worth, Ownership, Rights Dictionary Google

The definition of "**Equity**" determines the distribution of **Opportunity costs**, "*an economics term that refers to the value of what you have to give up in order to choose something else.*" (shopify Business encyclopedia) Your decision will speak to the **where** our city is willing to create "**opportunities** for all residents to achieve their **highest potential**."

"It tells us we aren't welcome in a neighborhood if we can't afford to live anywhere."
(*Equity in Transportation* https://youtu.be/YZmZ_zJcoE8)

Chet Funk, Erich Leidel and Nathan Jameson are the **first** developers to propose affordable housing where historic redlining created the whitest community in St. Paul, Macalester Groveland. I've come to wonder if it has remained the whitest because it takes courage to poke the wealthiest and most educated group. MGCC approved 1074-1096 James Avenue's CUP and Variances because, as one member noted, "**these are the tools we have to create change.**"

Kate Baxter-Kauf, Chair of MGCC's Inclusivity Task Force wrote "*We are working to make Mac Groveland the anti-racist, inclusive and welcoming place we know it can be in 2021.*" I'm asking for your help to send a message that affordable housing is achievable in Macalester Groveland. Please approve the CUP and Variances for 1074-1096 James Avenue.

Respectfully,

Cathy Plessner
2038 Summit Avenue

From: jackfei@aol.com <jackfei@aol.com>

Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 9:02 AM

To: chet@aleph-mgmt.com <chet@aleph-mgmt.com>; Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul) <mike.richardson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: James Ave Apartment - City Feedback



Hi Mike,

Please encourage the Planning Commission to support the CUP and Variance Request.

The developers have optimized the use (and tax revenue) for this site and communicated with the neighbors and the city staff to develop the plan.

Thanks for your help,
Jack Fei

1359 Sargent Ave
St Paul, Mn
55105

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: Kate Baxter-Kauf <katebaxterkauf@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 12:49 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Variance for James Avenue Apartments

Hi,

I write in support of the variances for the James Avenue apartments in consideration by the Zoning Committee. I think that this project requests incredible reasonable variances and is entitled to the CUP for the affordable housing work being done.

The developers have been nothing but responsive and helpful, are integrated into the neighborhood, and seek to build much needed housing that is entirely consistent with the neighborhood generally and that corner specifically - the building is shorter than the apartments across the street, on lower ground, and it is an area with access to transit and food that is incredible important in combatting concerns about food deserts and neighborhood diversity.

I supported the Mac Groveland Community Council's recommendation to grant the variances and CUP, and I urge the city to do the same.

Kate Baxter-Kauf
1739 Palace Ave, St Paul, MN 55105