

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: ZF#21-269-061-695 Grand CUP and variances.
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:53:17 AM

From: William Pesek <williampesekcity@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:13 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: William Pesek <williampesekcity@gmail.com>
Subject: ZF#21-269-061-695 Grand CUP and variances.

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Sonja,

I am a homeowner at 769 Lincoln Ave.

I oppose the 695 Grand CUP and variances application. An overwhelming opposition from Summit had been voiced.

I support development that complies w currant rules.

Bill Pesek

From: [James Hardy](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: Opposition for ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 4:39:12 PM

On Jul 13, 2021, at 4:22 PM, James Hardy <hardy_25941@msn.com> wrote:

My name is Brenda Hardy and my husband and I bought our home at 796 Summit over 27 years ago.

My home email address is hardy_25941@msn.com.

I oppose the 695 Grand CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies. The building is simply too large for the neighborhood. The proposed building is too big and too tall.

Great thought and effort went into the East Grand Avenue Overlay plan and granting variance exceptions opens the door for block after block of additional large, overwhelming buildings that are out of character with the neighborhood and vision for Grand Avenue.

Builder profitability should not be the guiding factor in allowing variances. Lund's executive Tres Lund came to our block over a year ago with plans for a 5-story store and apartment complex with the excuse that they couldn't afford to build it unless they built 5 stories. The Dixies proposal is similar. Please do not compromise the value of homeowners' property to enrich the pockets of developers.

I support a mixed-use development that complies with current zoning and the East Grand Avenue Overlay.

Please allow for no exceptions.

Brenda Hardy

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:54:30 AM

From: Carole Pesek <carottee@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 2:39 AM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: Carole Pesek <carottee@aol.com>
Subject: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Sonja,

I oppose the 695 Grand Ave rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

I am a Crocus Hill homeowner, living at 769 Lincoln Ave, St Paul, for over 30 years.

This proposed structure is far too tall and overall too massive for the site and surrounding area. It will overwhelm the neighborhood, damaging the character, the charm and value of this beautiful neighborhood in St Paul.

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning codes and would ask no exception be made.

These city zoning codes were put in place specifically to protect the character of Grand Avenue.

Public comment opposed this proposal by an enormous margin of 10 to 1, in addition to a petition opposing this project with 401 signatures being presented. I was astounded that the members of the SHA would so easily ignore the significant input of their neighbors, business-owners and friends.

Likewise I was stunned that the St Paul Planning Commission ignored the overwhelming response opposing this proposal.

This neighborhood does not want a 5 story monster that ignores the City's own Comprehensive Plan.

Thank you,
Carole Otte Pesek
651-341-3453
carottee@aol.com

From: [Chris Arlandson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixie's development/695 Grand Ave.
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 5:41:20 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

All,

My family and I have lived in the Grand Avenue neighborhood for 20+ years, and we oppose the proposed non-conforming development of 695 Grand Avenue. The proposed project is too large, with inadequate parking, and the neighborhood would suffer under these shortcomings. Worse, the precedent would result in similar non-conformance on Grand Avenue. I'm a structural engineer in the industry. Having worked on hundreds of similar projects over the past 20 years, it is clear to me that a more suitable proposal can and will be made, if only the thoughtful and wise existing zoning guidelines are enforced.

The zoning guidelines are in place for exactly this purpose – to support development that is healthy for the City and the neighborhood, and to protect against harmful development. If you simply apply the guidelines and enforce the zoning rules there will inevitably be development that is both economically viable and supports the health of the neighborhood and the City.

I'm available at 612-990-0266 if additional perspective would be useful.

Regards,



From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: The proposed Development, ZF# 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP & Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:51:44 AM

From: Christine Graf <christine.graf@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:46 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Fwd: The proposed Development, ZF# 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP & Variances

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Dear Ms Butler,

In the preceding email relating to the proposed development - which we oppose - I neglected to include our address. It is

Christine and Dennis Graf
62 S. Dale, Apt B
St. Paul, MN 55102

Yours respectfully,
Christine (Graf)

Begin forwarded message:

From: Christine Graf <christine.graf@comcast.net>
Subject: **The proposed Development, ZF# 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP & Variances**
Date: July 13, 2021 at 8:38:23 PM CDT
To: sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Cc: Christine Graf <christine.graf@comcast.net>

Dear Ms Butler,

We are against the 695 Grand CUP and Variance application for the 695 Grand/Dixies (ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand and variances).

The five-story building planned would be completely wrong for that site - too large, out of scale with its setting, totally inappropriate for the neighborhood.

We are homeowners who live next to Grand Avenue and close to 695 Grand: our quality of life would be negatively affected by the intrusion of such a large development. In its place we favor a mixed-use development like the East Grand Avenue Overlay, which conforms to existing zoning laws.

The existing zoning laws have served Grand Avenue and its nearby neighborhoods well: this is no time to disregard them in favor of outsized developments that require variances.

Respectfully yours,

Christine M. Graf
Dennis E. Graf

From: [Becky Erickson and Dan Sullivan](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances - Dixie's Redevelopment Project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:13:24 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to urge you to oppose the zoning application and variances for 695 Grand/Dixies. This project is too big and too tall and is out of character with our neighborhood. We believe the current proposal, if approved, will damage the neighborhood and adversely affect future development along Grand. We are in support of a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules, rules which were carefully considered and enacted to protect and preserve the street and neighborhood. The East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules should control the decision, and the application, as it is currently written, should be denied. Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed. If you approve all the variances, you ignore the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules, which will influence future development on this corridor and will encourage additional applications for variances. Please decline these variance requests and encourage the developers to reconfigure the project to fit with space.

We support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules. We support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Multiple exceptions should not be made.

Respectfully,

Daniel Sullivan and Becky Erickson
Summit Hill Residents and Homeowners
857 Lincoln Avenue

From: [Ellen Thomson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: SUBJECT: Opposition to ZF#21-269-061,695 Grand Cup and Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 12:49:08 PM

My apologies, I forgot to include my address and other requested information.

ZF#21-269-061,695 Grand Cup and Variances

My name and address:
Ellen M. Thomson
225 Farrington Street
St. Paul, MN 55012
651=283-7246

On Wed, Jul 14, 2021 at 11:59 AM Ellen Thomson <ellenmthomson@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Commissioners:

I've been a resident in both the Summit Hill and Ramsey Hill neighborhoods for over 30 years, and I'm dismayed to see the size of this project. Please deny the variances and the CUP. I oppose the size, bulk and height of this proposal. I would support a **middle density** mixed use project that would conform with the existing zoning, including the East Grand Overlay and a B2 or T2 intensity. It would provide needed housing, enhance the neighborhood, and come in at a more reasonably priced housing cost for the future residents.

Sincerely,
Ellen Thomson

From: grtodd@comcast.net
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Cc: [Noecker, Rebecca \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP with variances - Response to Staff Report
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 9:32:12 PM
Attachments: [Response to the Staff Report 2.pdf](#)

My name and address is as follows:

Gary R. Todd
682 Summit Ave
St. Paul, MN 55105

This public comment is for the following:

File #	21-269-061
Name	695 Grand CUP with variances
Property Address	695 Grand Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105

I oppose granting the CUP and variance requests for 695 Grand. I have a couple of questions related to the Staff Report that was submitted for this file and I've attached a document that presents the reasons I believe that the CUP and variance requests should be denied.

The Staff Report in Section G states that the project will be substituting 24 secure bicycle parking spots for 8 car parking spots. Doesn't 63.210 (b) allow to substitute 4 secure bicycle parking spots for 1 car parking spot? Has this code changed? Shouldn't this be only 6 car parking spots?

In Section H, related to the District Council Recommendation, states that the District Council ... recommend variances from the EG East Grand Overlay District. From the minutes of the June 17th meeting I thought that the "Board recommends that the developer seek variances from EGAOD to get their project developed." Is that what was intended to be said here? I wasn't sure if I was poorly informed and that the SHA Board had recommended the variances.

Thank you.
GRT

Gary R. Todd
682 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
grtodd@comcast.net
651-470-4720 – cell

“The best music forgets that it’s being sung.
It comes naturally.”

Apeirogon by Colum McCann

Gary R. Todd
682 Summit Ave
St. Paul, MN 55105

This document is a response to the Staff Report for File #21-269-061 – 695 Grand CUP with Variances – dated July 12, 2021. The CUP and variance requests should be denied for the following reasons:

CUP and variance requests violate the following zoning codes

- 66.331 Density and dimensional standards
 - Footnote (e) “Except in the river corridor overlay district, height of structures may exceed the maximum if set back from side and rear setback lines a distance equal to additional height. Structures shall be **no more than twenty-five (25) feet high alongside and rear property lines abutting RL-RT2 residential districts; structures may exceed this twenty-five (25) foot height limit if stepped back from side and rear property lines a distance equal to the additional height.**”
 - Reading Footnotes (e) and (g) together would indicate that with a CUP, heights up to 90 feet could be allowed **EXCEPT when the traditional district abuts an RT2 district** which would take precedence. In that case (which is true here), the height limit is 25 feet with more height allowed with stepbacks equal to the additional height. No mention of a CUP occurs in Footnote (e). So, to allow 59 feet 10 inches would require that the stepback be a total of 26 feet 10 inches. The proposed structure fails to meet this requirement.
- 66.342 (b) Traditional neighborhood design standards
 - (2) *Transitions to lower-density neighborhoods.* **Transitions in density or intensity shall be managed through careful attention to building height, scale, massing and solar exposure.**
- **Failure to meet these codes indicates that the CUP and variance requests should be denied.**

All benefits detailed in the St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan that this proposal claims to deliver, can equally be provided by a smaller project that transitions to the adjacent residential districts without the negative impacts to traffic, parking, pedestrian safety and the character of the neighborhood.

CUP and variance requests are not in compliance with the St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan policies

- Policy LU-1. Encourage transit-supportive density and direct the majority of growth to areas with the **highest existing or planned transit capacity.**
 - Route 63 on Grand Avenue is not listed by Metro Transit as a high-capacity route/corridor
 - Adding density to scale is what is needed
- Policy LU-29. Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design **transition to those permitted in adjoining districts.**
 - Proposed structure fails to transition down to lower density residential districts
- Policy LU-36. Promote neighborhood-serving commercial businesses within Urban Neighborhoods that are **compatible with the character and scale of the existing residential development.**
 - Proposed structure is neither compatible with the historic character nor with the scale of the existing residential districts
- Policy H-46. Support the development of new housing, particularly in areas identified as Mixed Use, Urban Neighborhoods, and/or in **areas with the highest existing or planned transit service**, to meet market demand for living in walkable, transit-accessible, urban neighborhoods.
 - Route 63 on Grand Avenue is not listed by Metro Transit as a high-capacity route/corridor
 - Adding density to scale is what is needed
- **The proposal fails to comply with the St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan so the CUP and variance requests should be denied.**

All benefits detailed in the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan that this proposal claims to deliver, can equally be provided by a smaller project that transitions to the adjacent residential districts and without the negative impacts to traffic, parking, pedestrian safety and the character of the neighborhood.

CUP and variance requests are not in compliance with the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan

- Overall Vision – Principles
 - #3 **Neighborhood ambiance is defined** and enriched by a well-maintained green urban landscape that includes lively and safe public spaces, arts and culture, pedestrian connections, healthy natural amenities and open spaces, and **well-designed new and old buildings that reflect the character, mass and scale of nearby buildings.**

- #5 All redevelopment is in keeping with the historic character and scale and includes amenities, such as landscaping and lighting, that are part of a mutually beneficial, collaborative project.
 - Proposed structure does not reflect the character, mass and scale of nearby buildings nor would it contribute to safe pedestrian crossings or open spaces.
- Policy G10 Scale and Height Limits Pursue limitations of the height and scale of new buildings on East Grand Avenue in an overlay district as follows:
 - Calls for adherence to the EG Overlay District design guidelines
 - New neighborhood survey reveals that a majority believe that the EG is valuable (47% believe that EG is valuable and another 28% say it is valuable but could use some changes).
 - SHA recommended in their June 17, 2021 meeting “that whatever recommendation is made by SHA not be viewed by the city as indicative of a recommendation on the future of the EGAOD.”
- Housing and Residential Life – Vision
 - The preservation of that character is of paramount importance to those who live and visit here. To continue to improve the ambience and the livability of the neighborhood, there must be better enforcement of current zoning and building guidelines, development and implementation of design and beautification guidelines and education of residents on these issues.
- Policy H-9. Mixed-use Buildings
 - Ensure that new and renovated mixed-use buildings on Grand Avenue respect the historic nature and character of the neighborhood, as well as providing dedicated off-street or underground parking for residents and tenants.
 - Proposed structure utilizes a fast-casual architecture, more appropriate for suburban settings. It does not ‘respect the historic nature and character of the neighborhood’.
- **The proposal fails to comply with the Summit Hill/District 16 Plan so the CUP and variance requests should be denied.**

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Concerning ZF#21-269-061 6995 Grand Avenue CUP and variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 12:14:52 PM

From: Ginger Pinson <gingerpinson@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 12:14 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Concerning ZF#21-269-061 6995 Grand Avenue CUP and variances

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hi Sonja,

I am a resident of St Paul and own unit #3 in the Chatlinwood Condo Association located at 215 S Chatsworth St.

I have lived in and enjoyed this city, especially our beautiful historic neighborhood for the past 32 years.

As I stated in my email to the Summit Hill Association, **I am opposed to the ZF#21-269-061 6995 Grand Avenue CUP and variances.** The proposed building is totally out of character for the Grand Avenue community; it is too big, too tall. The SHA received 480 responses opposing the proposal (10 to 1 against the proposal), and yet voted in favor of it. Why would the members of the SHA would so easily ignore the significant input of their neighbors, business-owners and friends? I was stunned that the St Paul Planning Commission ignored the overwhelming response opposing this proposal.

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules and would ask no exception be made.

The worst thing you can do for a historic beautiful community is to build monster buildings out of scale with everything around it. They don't make architecture like what we have in St. Paul anymore. It's gorgeous and all that come here for the first time fall in love. The best thing about Grand Ave. is the charm. Please don't destroy it. There are other ways.

Thank you,

Ginger Pinson
651 325-6018

From: [Gwen Lerner](#)
To: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:46:40 AM

I have lived at 690 Linwood Avenue in the Crocus Hill area for many years and frequent the businesses along Grand Avenue, including the eastern end, and I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

I do support a mixed use development that would add significant affordable housing units and comply with current zoning rules and the East Grand Avenue Overlay, such as the alternative design for this location that has been publicized. Increased affordable housing on Grand is important and should be accomplished under the current zoning rules.

Gwen Lerner
690 Linwood Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105

From: [Hillary Parsons](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: OPPOSITION TO ZF#21-269-101 695
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 4:01:06 PM

My name is Hillary Berit Parsons
I live at 42 Saint Albans Street South, Unit 1, Saint Paul 55105
I would like to present at the Thursday, July 15, 2021 meeting,

From: Hillary Parsons
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 3:56 PM
To: PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Subject: Comments regarding 695 Grand -

Hello my name is Hillary Parsons, and I live at 42 St Albans.

I wanted to shed some insight as to how the Summit Hill Board has voted against the large majority of public input received.

First I served on The Summit Hill board from 2018 until this May. I attended all of the developer meetings, starting in March.

The planning commission should be aware that three members of the Summit Hill board had non-public undisclosed meeting with the developer before the "initial" March 22nd meeting. These three Summit Hill Association representative were not elected by the board, and these meetings were not disclosed to the board ahead of time. While I think these meetings were held with the best of intentions, the result is that recommendations were made that were not reflective of the concerns of the broader neighborhood. Importantly, not one of those three members represented anyone who lived on Grand Avenue, or had a shared alley with Grand Avenue. This is a very important constituency that was left out. This was a huge oversight. The building massing and site placement is essentially unchanged since the March 22 meeting, and it was shaped by three people who do not know what it is like to live along or in shared proximity to Grand. I repeat, this is a huge oversight. Grand and side streets (like St Albans) have the majority of the density and the most affordable housing in the district, and yet these folks did not have a seat at the table.

Commissioners should also know two things about the Summit Hill vote (1) that not all board members were allowed to vote, and (2) that board members who are not residents were allowed to vote.

This is directly due two unique (outlier/peculiar/singular/unusual/uncommon/aberrant ?) policies and, in my opinion, harmful policies of Summit Hill. The first is a policy that allows non-residents to serve on the district council zoning whose purpose, as described on

stpaul.gov, is to “engage residents.” StPaul.gov defines districts councils as “**resident groups** that engage and represent the people living.” In fact, Summit Hill is the only DC to allow non-residents on its board. Summit Hill limits non-residents to two board members, but it actually had three non-residents serving on its board for over 6 months, because the president moved out of the district but remained on the board. There are currently two non-residents on the board, and both were allowed to vote and voted in favor of this project. Second, SHA has a policy, again this is unique to Summit Hill and not a City policy or policy that other DC’s have, that board members within the notice area on a land use matter are presumed to have a conflict of interest and are not allowed to vote. In this case, given the large size of the site, and the 350’ notice area, this aberrant policy excludes residents nearly 1000 feet of Grand Avenue, and extending 850 feet north and south. This is an area of 799,000 SF –that’s 6.9 acres. That is across Grand all the way to Lincoln Avenue and across Summit into Summit-University district. These are mostly multifamily homes. This is the densest node of Summit Hill. That’s a lot of households silenced.

I resigned because I was not going to be allowed to be vote on this project. Another board member, who is landlord of a two-story “naturally occurring affordable housing” apartment within the exclusion zone, resigned from the board. Two other board members who reside within the “exclusion zone” remained on the board but were not allowed to vote. So, when you look at the SHA vote, please remember that the multifamily residents who live within the 7 acres closest to the development were silenced. I am still disturbed by the way SHA handled this, strongly favoring developers OVER their hundreds of constituents. The SHA’s role is NOT to assist developers and PR agents over the roaring voice of its human constituents. I could not feel less heard by the people representing me. There have not been compromises made by the developers significant enough to address the concerns hundreds of people living nearby.

Yes, some of us got mad in the Zoom meetings, maybe wrote imperfect words in the chat, but what do you expect when the powerful don’t listen? What is the recourse when we don’t have in person meetings? When did we have when the Developer didn’t listen? When they made they building taller? And when the District Council, who is supposed to represent us, did not let us have a voice?

The developer claims they made significant modifications based on neighborhood feedback. This simply isn’t true. They set back the building a bit more at the alley, but did NOTHING to mitigate the giant wall of brick along Saint Albans. Nothing. The “modifications” they made did little to reduce the size of the building, and they reduced the number of units by one. This is not compromise. This is money-hungry individuals barreling over significant and genuine concerns made by hundreds of individuals who live in the neighborhood.

They brought this project forward several years ago, and then withdrew based on the negative

neighborhood reaction. Instead of listening to that input, they returned several years later with a MUCH BIGGER PROJECT.

I feel like the developer has hypnotized otherwise reasonable people into approving a project that simply overwhelms the area, will drive up rents, and which will actually DECREASE diversity in the area. I just can't believe that the city supports this project over the voice of its people. The SHA's support DOES NOT REPRESENT the local residents. I resigned from the board in disgust over the blatant favoritism shown this project, as well the SHA's continued attempts to silence individuals in "public" meetings. This is NOT the Saint Paul I have known and loved for the last 15 years.

Please please please please be reasonable and deny this project. It is a mistake for the neighborhood. It is a mistake for Saint Paul. People are not going to be visiting Grand avenue due to the parking issues that will absolutely arise due to this project. The apartments don't have enough spots for the units, and there is a massive reduction of parking available for employees and people going to the restaurants and retail. The spots are expensive to rent, \$175.00 a month. People who live in the apartment and their visitors will park on the street, reducing the number of spots available for current residents, and for people frequenting the businesses in the area along Grand.

This is a mistake. The city will regret this. People are already leaving the neighborhood. Two units in my building are for sale, but there doesn't seem to be much interest. People simply don't want to live next to this project. I don't blame them. If I were in a different financial position I would get the heck out.

Please do something to stop this. My neighborhood is begging you.

Yours,

Hillary Parsons

Jennifer L. Miller
23 St. Albans Street South. St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
jenmil68@gmail.com

July 14, 2021

To: Zoning Committee Secretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
cc: Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Re: Opposition to 695 Grand rezoning and CUP variances
(ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances)

Dear Zoning Committee:

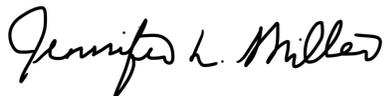
I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the rezoning and conditional use permit (CUP) variances application for 695 Grand. I am also writing to you as a professional planner and as a homeowner who has lived on South St. Albans near Grand for over 20 years.

The applications currently before you for 695 Grand CUP and variances are not consistent with major policies adopted in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. As proposed, this development is totally incompatible with the general scale of the surrounding neighborhood, does nothing to expand the availability of affordable housing in our city, and serves as a prime example of classic spot zoning.

Though the developer claims that the proposed project will not be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger health, safety, or general welfare, I sincerely hope that your committee will listen to the hundreds of citizens who have voiced their opinions that this project will have just the opposite effect on our neighborhood. The developer and project investors have clearly stated that they are taking actions to bypass existing zoning rules so as to maximize their financial gain. Please recognize what motivates them, please respect and implement the goals and policies of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, and please deny this rezoning and CUP variances application.

I am not opposed to mixed use development at 695 Grand, but that development should not proceed unless it is in compliance with existing zoning rules and the terms that have been approved in the East Grand Avenue Overlay District.

Respectfully,



Jennifer L Miller

From: [Jeanne Kruchowski](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: RE: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:38:11 PM

July 13, 2021

RE: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

Dear Sirs,

I am Jeanne Kruchowski, a homeowner residing at 722 Summit Avenue, St Paul, MN 55105.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed CUP and variances application for 695 Grand Avenue. My objections are the following:

1) The rezoning of a single building plot as proposed is not being undertaken as a part of comprehensive zoning and is intended solely to enable the construction of the 5-story building planned by Saint Albans LLC for 695 Grand Avenue, which will be financially beneficial to the property owners of 695 Grand Avenue but detrimental to the neighborhood as a whole. The proposed construction is excessive in both height and footprint, it lacks appropriate historic granularity, and will destroy the character and uniqueness of Grand Avenue. It will negatively impact the property values of homeowners nearby. I am in favor of new mixed-use construction at the 695 Grand Avenue location, but it must be in keeping with the character of the avenue and in accordance with all current zoning rules. I fully support the existing East Grand Avenue Overlay, and exceptions should not be permitted.

2) When the necessity for exceeding the construction height and volume permitted for the 695 Grand Avenue location was questioned, Ari Parritz of Reuter Walton has stated on multiple occasions that “the numbers simply do not work with a smaller development”. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 462.357, Subd. 6, however, “Variances may be granted when the applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance... but“...Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties”. Therefore, the fact that the developers cannot make their numbers “work” with a smaller development is not a valid reason for any rezoning or any height variance(s) to be granted. Their acknowledged difficulty in making their numbers “work” is an admission that the proposed project is **not** the appropriate project for the location.

3) The development as currently proposed for 695 Grand Avenue is incompatible with the City of Saint Paul’s vigorously enforced Heritage Preservation Ordinance (municipal code chapter 73). It is incomprehensible that while owners of nearby residential properties are held to strict guidelines – apparently for the purpose of preserving an area of special historical and aesthetic interest - the City would contemplate rezoning and granting variances that would permit construction at 695 Grand Avenue that would negatively impact the historic, aesthetic, and financial values of the historic properties just a stone’s throw away on St. Albans Street and Summit Avenue.

Respectfully,

JM Kruchowski
722 Summit Avenue

From: [Cynthia McKeen](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:08:10 PM

Zoning File #21-269-061 695
695 Grand Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55105

We oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies. We support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

We live at the corner of Grand and Dale and have lived in the immediate neighborhood since 1974, participating in the renaissance of Grand Ave, working with neighborhood groups and enjoying many design/restoration activities for clients and friends. Many of our neighbors share the same history. Architects, designers and preservationists living among us have not agreed on every detail, but major areas of agreement have emerged; the importance of scale in new additions and projects has been a primary area of agreement year after year. Hours and hours have been spent creating standards to preserve the special buildings and surroundings that are unique to their time and place, buildings and spirit that cannot be replaced. Those who have worked hard to preserve a sensibility, a grace of scale, deserve to be heard.

With reference to scale, height is the most frequently addressed problem in discussions of this project, but the excessive scale of mass is even more significant. Even after many discussions, the essential difficulties with the new plan have not changed significantly. The quality of our environment and daily lives here needs to be respected. If those proposing change haven't been able to work within the adopted standards, they have not completely grasped the nature of the neighborhood yet and possibly are unaware of the amount of work it has taken to keep alive the feeling of "neighborhood" in our inner city home. Add to the proposed out-of-scale structure itself, the increase in scale of semitrucks and other vehicles too large for the width of Grand. This is not University Avenue. Add the issue of winter parking along Grand. Neighbors already have trouble moving vehicles for plowing, snow build-up along curbs means vehicles are out into the street somewhat further for weeks at a time, navigating Grand is slower and more congested and side streets suffer the same issues. The whole scale of planned usage is out of whack.

The residential charm and historic feel of our community is what drew unique businesses to Grand Avenue, as well as the people who support them. Ignoring so many residents who know their neighborhood well and who care deeply about it is not neighborly, no matter how 'polished' the online presence may be.

Thanks for hearing us out.
John and Cynthia McKeen
62 Dale Street S

Saint Paul, MN 55102

From: [John Miller](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Proposal for 695 Grand Avenue
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:58:57 PM

I am contacting you in reference to **ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances. I am opposed to any changes to accommodate this project. Stick with all original extant zoning regulations and restrictions. I am a nearby resident and believe that this proposal, if approved, would negatively affect my surroundings.**

John W. Miller, Jr.
706 Lincoln Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105
651-227-5410

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT IN **OPPOSITION TO ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances**

VIA EMAIL TO PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us; Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us

July 14, 2021

Dear Planning Commissioners:

I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies. I urge to deny the CUP and all variances for the project due to its inappropriate scale, and the lack of legal basis for variances or a CUP, both of which require unusual circumstances caused by the land.

Additionally, Commissioners should be aware that there are numerous errors and omissions in the submitted planning documents. These errors conveniently show less contrast in building height to the neighboring structures to the proposed Dixies project. Please see the attached Addendum.

I have prepared a video of a scheme of a EG overly complaint building. This video shows that it would be possible and reasonable, as well as beneficial, to develop this parcel as mixed-use buildings with housing over retail at the scale of the neighborhood, with no CUP or variances, and in compliance with the EG overlay and T2 or B2 zoning, with.

Link: <https://youtu.be/0Qo1j5i-sYk>

Sincerely,

Jonathan Mason
21 St. Albans

ADDENDUM

March 2021 Height diagram at West Interior Property line, by ESG

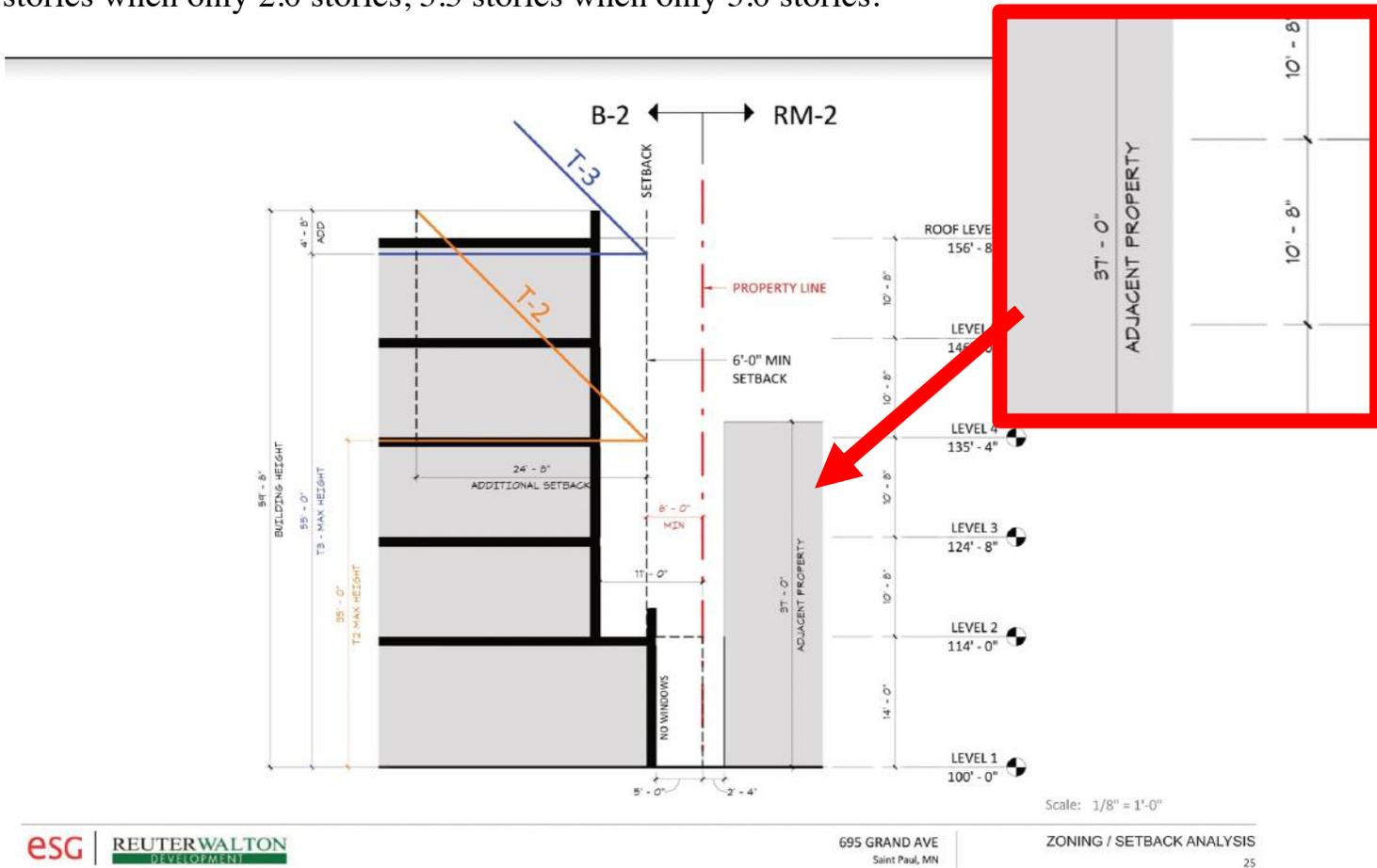
Errors and Omissions:

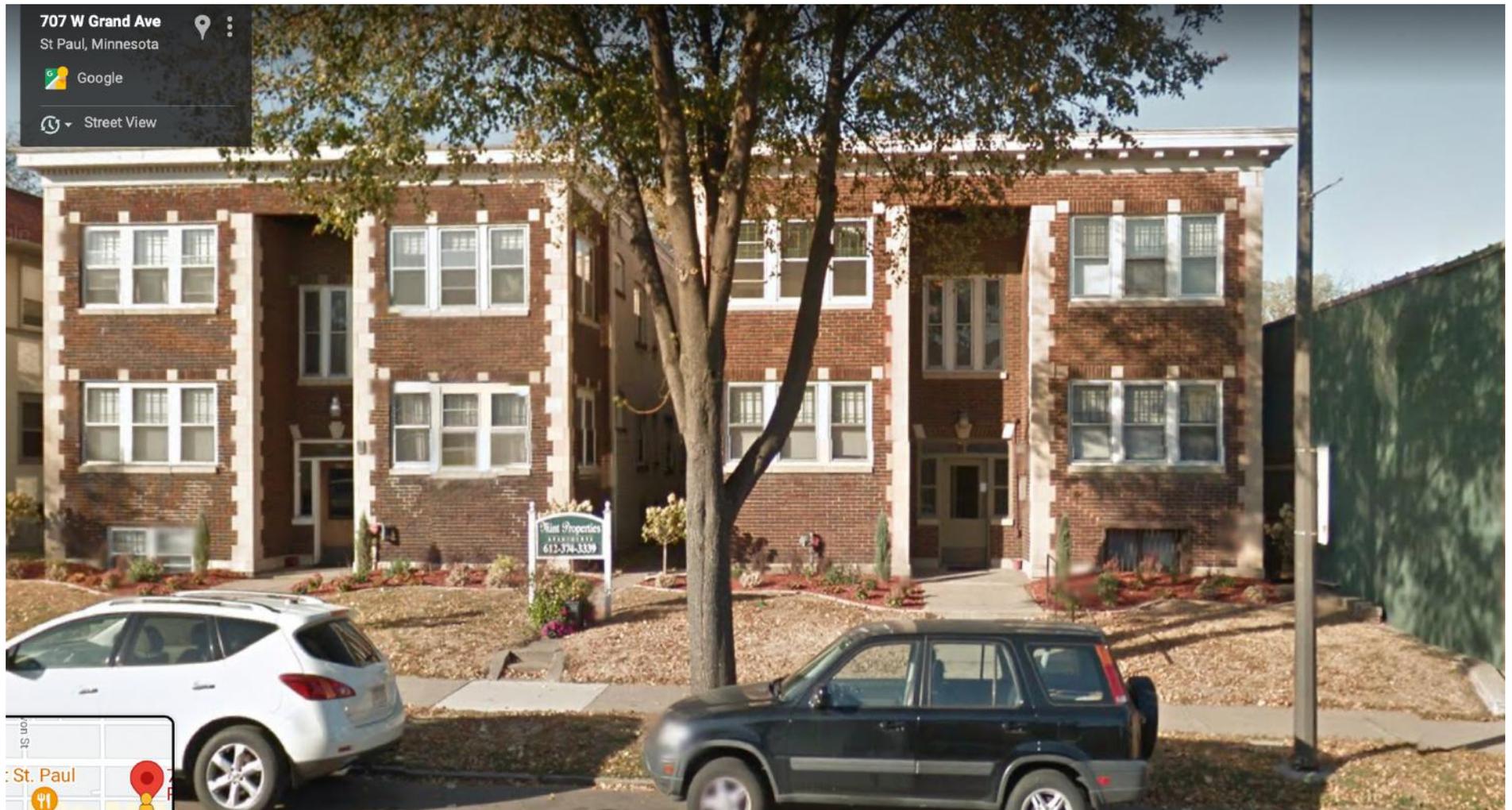
The height diagram shows an **inaccurate height for the neighboring 2-story** apartment building at 707 Grand. **Shown as 37-0**

Does not show current B2 limits, T2 limits, or EG limits, or “stepback” diagonal for T3.

Pointed out error to ESG in phone meeting and during public meetings.

Neighboring heights incorrectly represented as 3.5 storied when only 2.5 stories; 2.5 stories when only 2.0 stories, 3.5 stories when only 3.0 stories.



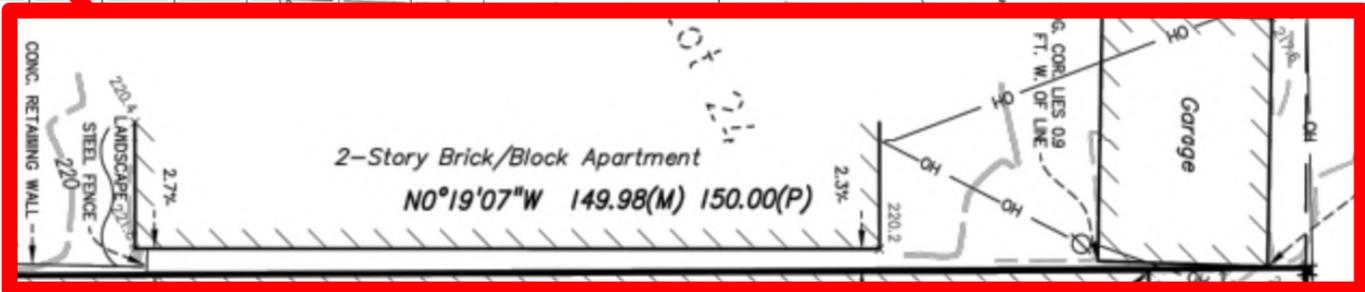
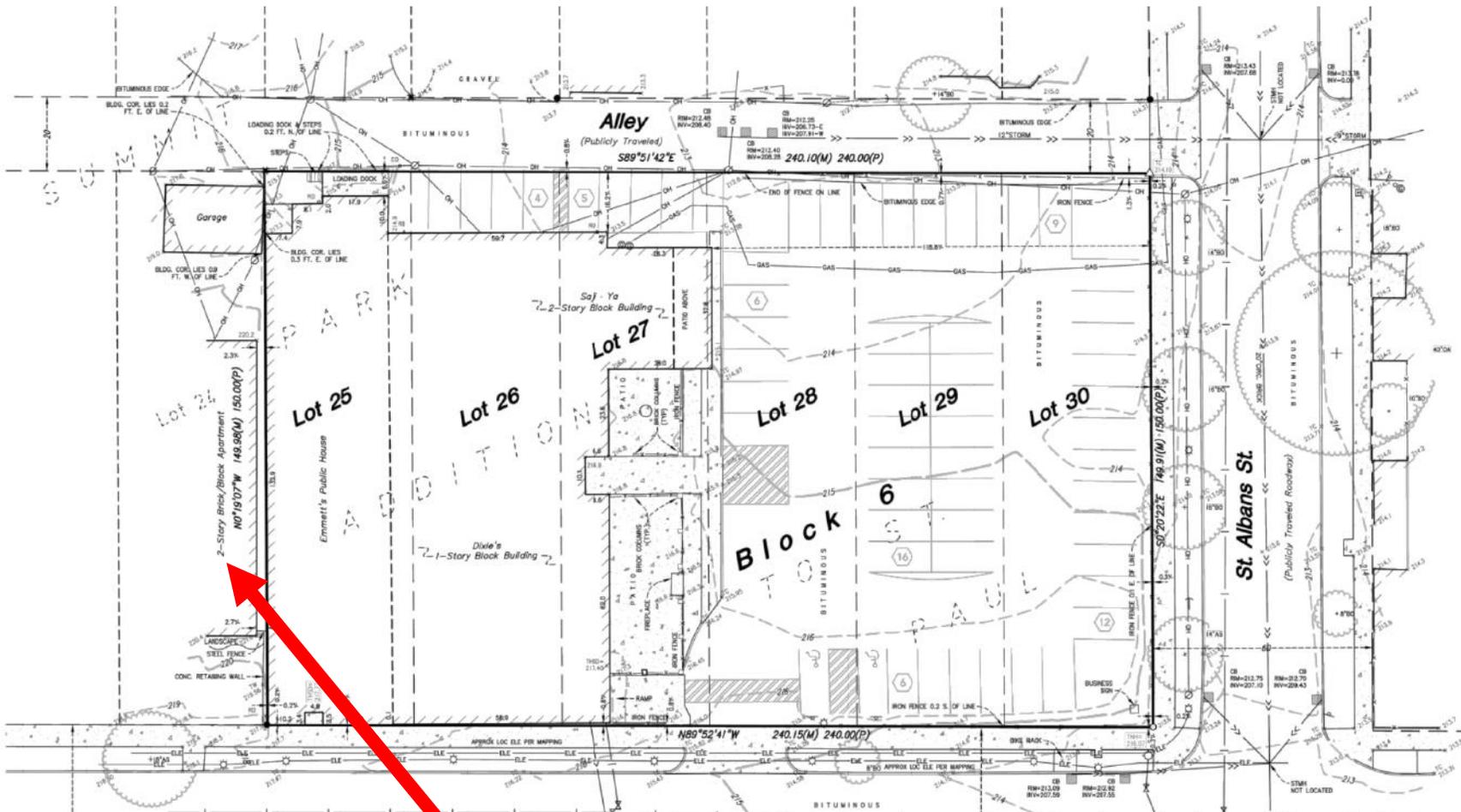


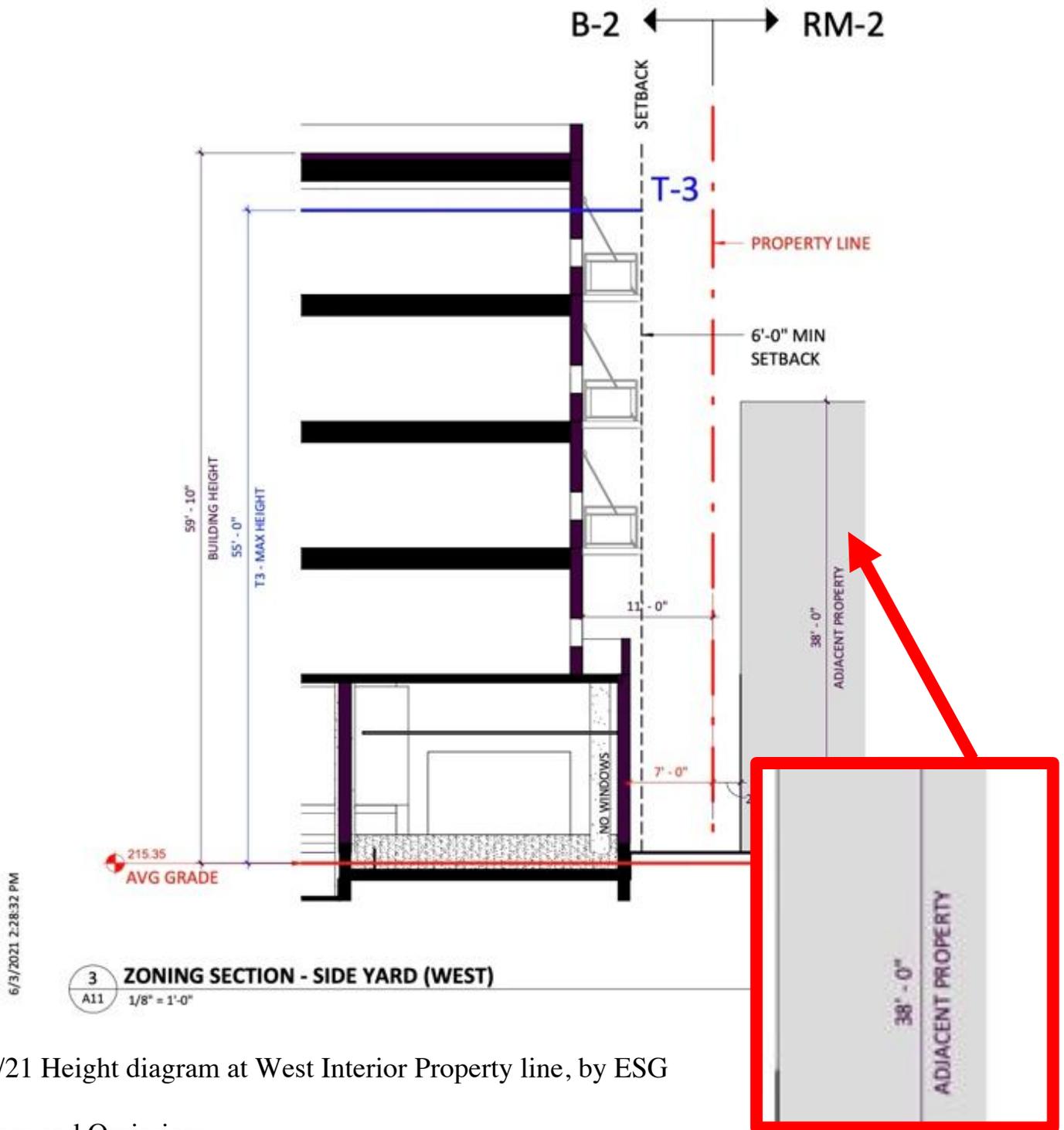
707 and 711 Grand, properties directly at West of Interior Property line, by Google Streetview

Errors and Omissions:

Properties are clearly only 2-stories. A professional would know that a 2-story building is not 37 feet tall.

Survey also shows as “2-story Brick/Block Apartment”;
Field measure of building establish height as 25’-0” with 24” grade



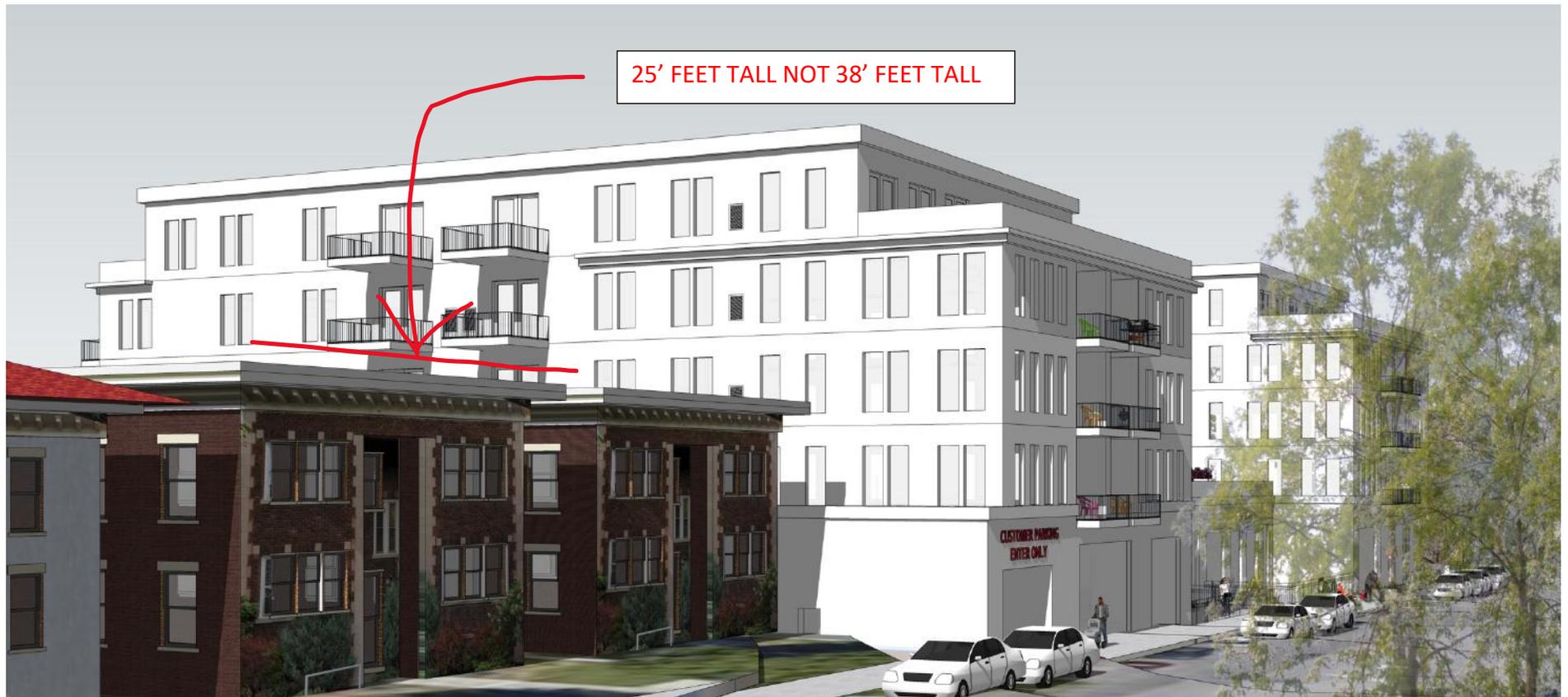


6/3/21 Height diagram at West Interior Property line, by ESG

Errors and Omissions:

The height diagram shows an **inaccurate height for the neighboring 2-story apartment building at 707 Grand. NOW SHOWN AS 38'-0"**

Fails to show current B2 limits, T2 limits, or EG limits, or "stepback" diagonal for T3.



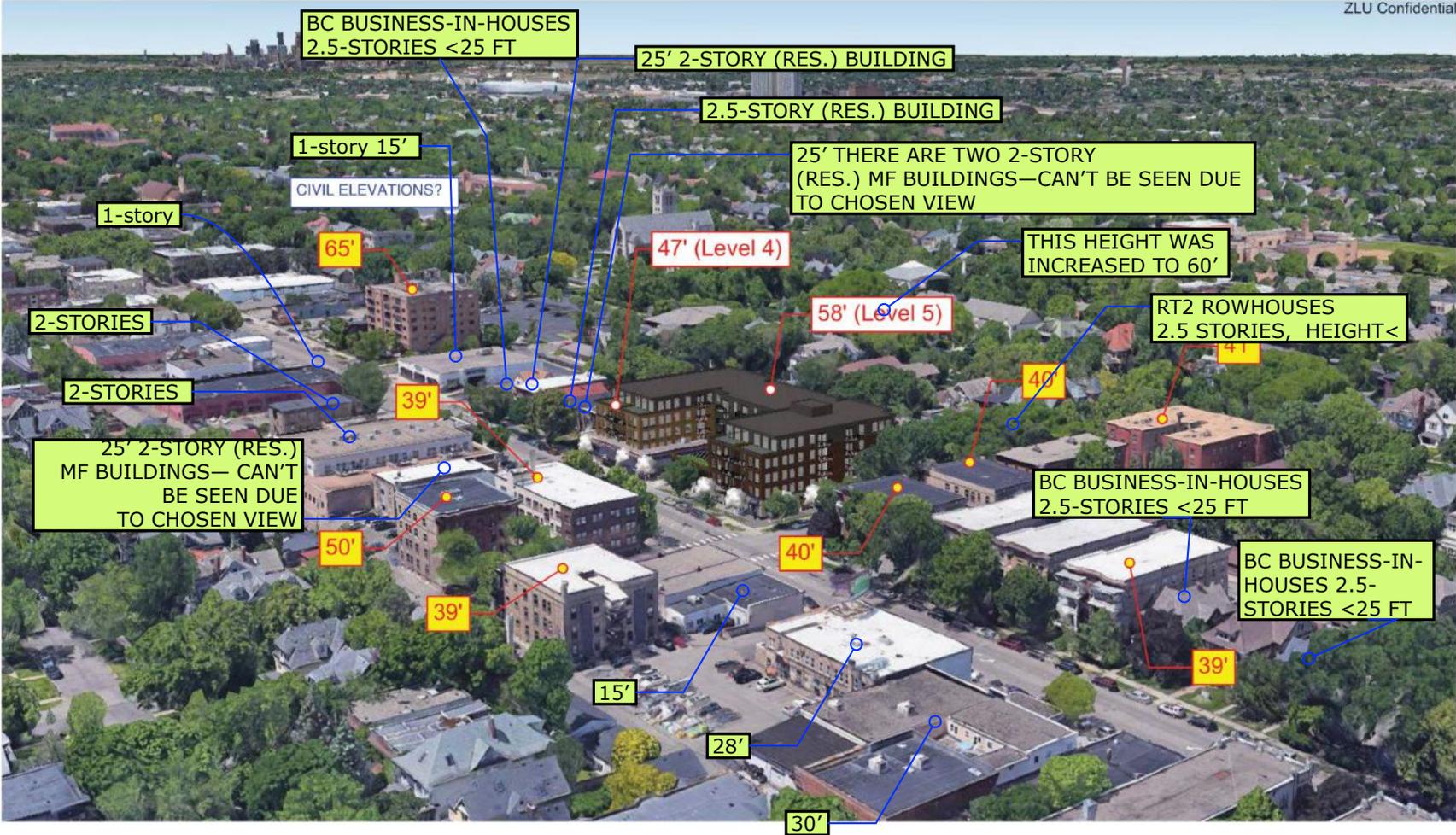
25' FEET TALL NOT 38' FEET TALL

Extreme difference in Height

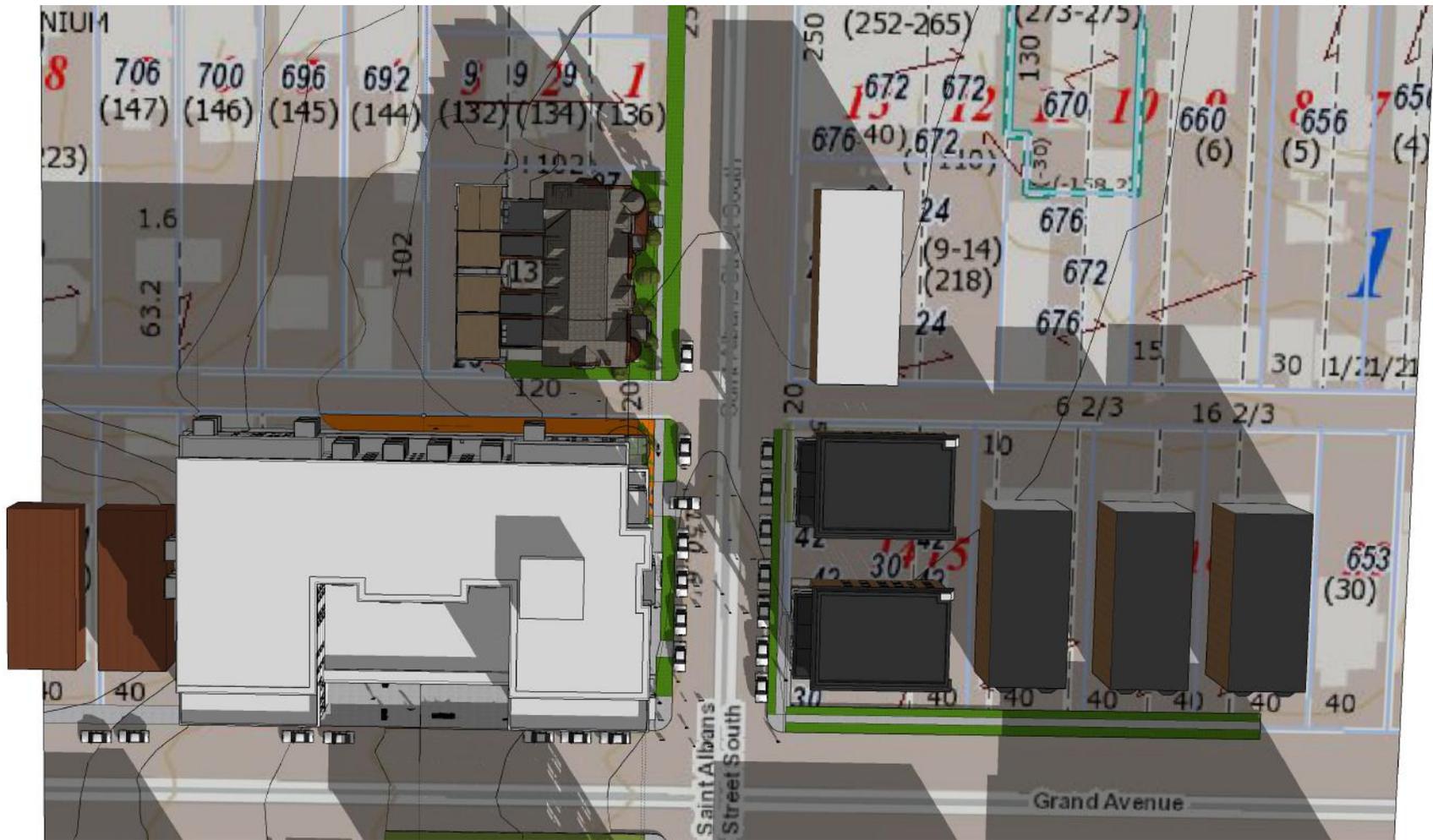




33' - 6"
Mid-point Roof
2 1/2 stories



DEVELOPER PROVIDED BIRDESEYE, WITH ADDED NOTES IN GREEN: DEVELOPER NARRATIVE OMITTS ALL SHORTER HEIGHTS, AND FAILS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES AND MIXED USE; RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES HAVE A 40 FT HEIGHT LIMIT DUE (PER EG OVERLAY) DUE TO THE ABOVE-GRADE MAIN FLOOR. OF THE 20+ SURROUNDING BUILDINGS WITHIN THE 350 FEET NOTIFICATION AREA, ALL BUT ONE (62 ST ALBANS) MEET THE EG HEIGHT LIMITS. ADDITIONALLY, ALL HAVE MUCH SMALLER LOT COVERAGE, SMALLER FOOTPRINTS, AND GREATER SETBACKS THAN 695 PROPOSAL. THE 65' SUBURBAN-STYLE MID-RISE AT GROTTO AND GRAND IS ONE OF THE REASON THE OVERLAY WAS ESTABLISHED—TO PREVENT SIMILARLY INAPPROPRIATE BUILDINGS.



Extreme Difference in Lot Coverage and footprint



From: [Judy Miller](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:48:29 AM

Reference to: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

I am opposed to the building being planned at the site of Dixie's on Grand Ave. I have lived in this neighborhood for 53 years. What keeps me here is the charm and vibrancy of Grand Ave. For 41 of those years I lived at 828 Lincoln where parking, even with permit parking, has always been an issue. Now I live at 854 Linwood. If this project goes ahead you will lose potential customers on Grand and renters of apartment buildings. Potential home owners will not consider Grand Ave. as an asset but as a liability to owning or selling a home.

Please listen to the neighborhood where the majority of owners are against this project. If this project goes through I am sure other buildings will be razed and big buildings will go in and parking will be more of an issue.

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

Thanks you for our consideration

Judy Miller
854 Linwood Ave.
651 235 8391

From: [Julia Johnson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: 695 Grand rezoning ZF#21-269-061
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:47:19 PM

To whom it may concern:

I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

I am a Summit Hill resident. This project will leach value from the neighborhood and give little or nothing in return. Existing zoning codes should be enforced.

Sincerely,

Julia Johnson

1042 Lincoln Avenue, St Paul, MN

From: [Kaaren Grimstad](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Vote against ZF#21-269-061
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 2:07:59 PM

My name is Kaaren Grimstad. I have been a resident/owner at 42 South Saint Albans #2 (55105) since 1976.

I am opposed to the CUP and Variances for the 695 Grand Avenue Development Project, as proposed by Reuter-Walton Developers.

The project is too big, too tall, and totally out of character for the neighborhood. I support a mixed-use development that complies with the East Grand Overlay. I urge you to insist that the developers follow the East Grand Overlay. Exceptions should not be made.

Thank you for voting against ZF#21-269-061.

Sincerely,
Kaaren Grimstad
42 South Saint Albans #2 (55105)

From: [Kathleen Gearin](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Re: 695 Grand development
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:31:11 AM

I forgot to include the address and file number. Address is ^95 Grand Ave. File number is ZF#21 269-061

Sent from my iPad

On Jul 14, 2021, at 11:16 AM, Kathleen Gearin <krgearin@gmail.com> wrote:

I am writing to oppose the rezoning and variance requests for the development at Grand and St Albans. There needs to be development at this site. The present proposal, however, is so massive in height and footprint that it overwhelms the other buildings in the neighborhood. Please do not grant the request to rezone to T3 and to have variances from present set-back, square footage and height requirements.

Kathleen Gearin
27 St Albans Street S.
St Paul MN
Sent from my iPad

From: [Kevin Peterson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Proposed 695 Grand Ave development
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 12:19:02 PM

Dear Zoning Committee,

As a long term resident of the Summit Hill area, I am adamantly opposed to the zoning alterations being requested for the proposed building at 695 Grand Ave. I own a home two blocks from Dixie's, and am very supportive of the advancement and growth of our Summit Hill neighborhood. Although I have always previously supported commercial property development on Grand Ave, I can't support this proposal. The proposed building is TOO BIG, and TOO TALL. It does not reflect the character of our neighborhood. The proposed structure simply ignores existing zoning restrictions clearly created to preserve the Grand Ave character. The building would dominate this end of Grand. The proposed structure does not build a better future for Grand Ave. Instead, the multiple exemptions to the zoning restrictions compromise pedestrian walkways, promote dangerous traffic patterns, and degrade the character of all of the surrounding properties on Grand Ave. To squeeze out the last few dollars, this developer will sacrifice Saint Paul's last historically important destination neighborhood. Such a building is more suited to University Ave, or Snelling Ave, but not Grand Ave! Make it smaller! Make it fit!

Kevin

Kevin A. Peterson MD, MPH
768 Goodrich Ave
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105

July 14, 2021

PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Re: ZF#21-269-061

Dear Zoning Committee Members:

I am, once again, writing in **opposition** regarding the applications by the owner/developer of the 695 Grand Avenue project. This time, I would like to address the CUP and variances to the East Grand Overlay District Plan that the developer is requesting.

The CUP and variances the developer is requesting do not comply with the East Grand Avenue Overlay District, nor do they comply with the cities' 2040 Comprehensive Plan directives.

The developers want you to approve an increase in height to 59'10", an increase of at least two-thirds of the height allowed in the EGAOD. The developers want you to increase the mass from 75,000s.f. to 152,500 s.f., for a building that is more than double what the current zone permits.

This substantial increase does not comply with the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan to transitions in scale and design to adjoining districts : Items LU-1, LU-29, LU-36, H-47 and H-50, all provide outlines for projects to be in keeping with the size and character of close neighbors and neighborhood and transit opportunities. This project does not comply with any of those.

Do not approve this request for CUP and variances.

Thank you,

Linda Makinen

24 St.Albans St. So., Unit 1

St. Paul, MN 55105

From: [Lloyd Lentz](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Opposed to 695 Grand project as currently proposed
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 3:55:43 PM

Hello,

I would like to voice my opposition to the current proposal being considered for 695 Grand Ave. It is in conflict with decades of work by local residents to keep the character and tone of our neighborhood in touch with what makes our neighborhood unique and desirable.

There is no justification for how large a footprint the building needs to take, nor is there any for how tall the building is proposed to be.

The neighborhood has spoken and the vast majority of surveyed and signed the petition are in opposition to the proposal it is now.

Please do not allow the variances to the building as currently requested.

Regards
Lloyd Lentz
692 Summit Ave, St Paul, MN 55105

From: [Lou Sudheimer](#)
To: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Cc: [historiclou](#)
Subject: Strongly Oppose the 695 Grand Monstrosity
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 7:54:23 PM

Re: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and Variances

To: All that have the Power to HALT this Project

I have lived around Grand Avenue for over 75 years; have owned a business on Grand Avenue; and have re-developed and restored over 30 historic properties in the immediate neighborhoods during my real estate career, including multiple National Register of Historic Places properties on Summit Avenue. I have served on the Board of Old Town Restorations, and worked on many many Ramsey Hill Association neighborhood rejuvenation and community building projects.

Our condominium restoration projects have been recognized and featured in "Better Homes & Gardens", and "Housing" Magazines nationally, and in "Architecture Minnesota" several times State-wide, as well as in multiple local publications.

I cry out to object in the strongest possible terms to this developer's complete disregard for everything most of us hold dear about Grand Avenue. This project is an abomination to Grand Avenue's fragile, character and the "Je n'ai sais quoi" charm that makes Grand a unique and special "attraction" within the entire Twin-City Metro Region. This desecration completely flies in the face of everything, that hundreds and probably Tens-of-Thousands of Saint Paul residents, voters, and citizens have worked for literally decades to preserve and rebuild.

How many of you would squirt a tube of Fire Engine Red paint onto a one-of-a-kind "Renoir masterpiece" ???

Grand's Traditional Zoning, and the "Overlay" rules were carefully crafted as thoughtful expressions of the collective will of this Neighborhood's Residents to protect and preserve Grand's character and charm. Please use these wise rules to reject this greed-driven, overly massive project - better solutions exist.

My prediction is, should this overbearingly large Giant be built, it will be held up Nationally by future urban planners as an example of exactly what NOT to do to a traditional neighborhood.

My message to the decision makers who must vote yay or nay: I personally know of an architect who voted to approve the 6 story, out-of-place tower at 745 Grand & Grotto. He has told friends, he wishes -- every day he drives by --he had had the wisdom & courage to speak and vote against it -- what a burden to bear.

Please don't make the same error, & live with unnecessary regret. Honor the wishes of the over 80% of survey respondents who are against this obvious mistake.

Louis C. Sudheimer
Historic Hill Homes Realty
965 Fremont Avenue
St. Paul, MN

-----Original Message-----

From: Lucy Johnson <lucyhjohnson@msn.com>

Sent: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:44 AM

To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: New development at Dixie

Please stop this plan. As a neighbor who walks the neighborhood this large building would be a mistake.
I'm all for development but this plan needs to be scaled back.

I am opposed to the current proposal. Thanks for your consideration.

Please include ZF#21-269-061-695 Grand CUP and variances

Thanks

Lucy Johnson

845 Lincoln Ave St Paul 55105

I am opposed to the current plan for development at the Dixie sight

Lucy

Sent from my iPhone

**OPPOSITION TO GRAND CUP AND VARIANCES
ZF #21-269-061, 695**

**The Developer's Response to Neighborhood Input Was to Make the
Building Taller!**

On April 8, 2021 Peter Kenefick , the Reuter Walton development team and members of the Summit Hill Association presented a proposal via webinar to the public to replace Dixies, Saji Ya and Emmett's at 695 Grand Avenue, Saint Paul.

Subsequent webinar presentations were given, first directly to the general public and subsequently moderated by the Summit Hill Association through June 17,2021. All input from the public was electronic.

Response by the public was vocal and swift. The main input from the public was that the building would overwhelm the neighborhood. It was just too massive –it was too tall, too big and did not transition to the neighborhood.

The 695-development team responded:

After considerable public input that the building was too tall –the developer said “it's not shorter” and made it taller! They made minimal cosmetic changes, but no attempt was made to transition the project into the neighborhood.

Initially , the height to the roof was:

56 feet 8 inches

it is now 59 feet 10—essentially 60 feet tall!

It GREW BY NEARLY 3- AND ONE-HALF FEET

Since the final iteration of the building is a height of 59 feet 10 inches (essentially 60 feet)-for this they need the **CUP** since the maximum height for **T3 is 55 feet** .

I strongly urge the zoning committee to turn down the 695 Grand development teams' request for CUP and variances .

**Marilyn Bach
Summit Hill resident**

From: [MARIT LEE KUCERA](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Vote against ZF#21-269-061
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 3:22:27 PM

Dear Committee,

As a long time resident/property owner here in Saint Paul, I am making another appeal to you, this time to

Vote against ZF#21-269-061, the CUP and Variances for 695 Grand.

I have many reasons why the CUP and Variances should be denied.

In my appeal today, I list three, describing why the proposed 695 Grand does not fit in size or scale to its neighbors:

--It is too tall (60+feet), 1.5 times as tall as the 3-story condos at 30 and 42 South St. Albans (1906).

--It is too big (footprint is over 30,000sq. ft) with a total floor area of 108,000 sq. ft (excluding parking).

--It is too dense (80 market-rate rental apartments means upwards of 150 residents) in an area of East Grand that already has high density, especially for the amount of parking available. Current density barely handles the traffic on this narrow one-way Saint Albans Street from Summit to Grand. Saint Albans is the proposed entry/exit for the 68 below-ground residential parking places and the exit for the 31 patron parking spots on the ground level.

Keeping the proposed project within the regulations of the Grand Avenue Overlay will provide the building size and kind of new energy that this neighborhood can sustain and will gladly welcome.

Thank you for **voting against the CUP and Variances in ZF#21-269-061**.

Sincerely,

Marit Lee Kucera

30 South Saint Albans #5, Saint Paul 55105

From: [Marquita Oleson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: Automatic reply: 695 Project
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 9:34:46 AM

Adding the appropriate zoning file number: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP

Hello,

My name is Marquita Oleson and I am writing to the Zoning Commission as a resident of the immediate vicinity of the 695 Grand proposed site. I am surprised to hear that the commission has not been more responsive to the broad opposition to granting the variances requested by the developers of this project as evidenced by the petition signatures and the comments at the previous meeting. The zoning codes exist to protect the historic character of the Summit Hill neighborhood, and the project proposal as it stands now flies in the face of what these codes were designed to do.

I ask that those serving on this committee renew their commitment to represent their neighborhood and the residents therein. I, like a vast majority of my neighbors, strongly support development in this area. But this particular proposal does not fit the neighborhood, as evidenced by the many codes it would need exemption from to move forward. If this project were 35 - 45 units, the proposal were three stories, and the building a more appropriate size for the footprint of the site, there would not be strong opposition from the residents of this area. My mom lives on Beard Avenue South in Minneapolis, and a similar proposed project was downsized slightly to fit the aesthetic and character of the neighborhood. This is a great example of how a neighborhood can work with developers to find the right solution for the developers and the neighborhood alike.

I ask the zoning committee to fulfill your function to serve the constituents of the Summit Hill neighborhood and ask the developers to revise the proposal to meet code requirements that preserve the character and historic nature of this neighborhood. Remember: This cannot be undone. Once a building this size is allowed in this area, it will pave the way for others. We are not Uptown Minneapolis, and we all want to see this neighborhood grow but it is the zoning committee's function to ensure the growth is appropriate, safe, and preserves the character of this great neighborhood.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for further comment or clarification. I thank you for representing those you serve.

Sincerely,
Marquita Oleson
42 St Albans St S., #6
St Paul, MN 55105

On Wed, Jul 14, 2021 at 9:28 AM *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Thank you for submitting your comments. In order for your comments to be included in the public record, you must make sure that you have included your full name, address of residence, and zoning file number and property address of the zoning case for which you are submitting written testimony. Testimony without this information will not be provided to

the Zoning Committee and will not be included in the record.

Please note: The deadline to receive written testimony is at 12 Noon* the Wednesday prior to the Thursday Zoning Committee meeting during which the zoning case is to be heard.

*We will be making an exception to receive written testimony up until 4:00 p.m. regarding the application for 695 Grand.

July 14, 2020

Dear Saint Paul Planning Commission and Zoning Committee,

I am writing in OPPOSITION to the requested variances for 695 Grand Avenue.

On July 1, The Zoning Committee denied the rezoning of 695 Grand Avenue out of the East Grand Avenue Overlay Zone. The rationale stated in the Committee resolution was that this would not be consistent with the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan

Now, you are considering variances that would have the exact same effect as the rezoning that you rejected. It would allow a project to exceed all the height and scale dimensions established in the overlay zone.

The Summit Hill Plan is still in effect. Nothing has changed.

It would be illogical and inconsistent for the Zoning Committee to now recommend variances from the East Grand Avenue Overlay Zone.

In effect, there is no difference between rezoning or granting these variances, unless you fear the rezoning would be considered “spot zoning” and subject to legal challenge. Is this why the Summit Hill Association suggested a work around via variances? It is all quite a mystery to me.

In any event, the applicant has failed to satisfy three key requirements for the variances.

1. The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

The proposed project is not consistent with the Summit Hill Plan that is still in effect. The Zoning Committee has already recognized this in its action of July 1 and denied rezoning because the proposed project would violate the height and mass requirements of the called for in that plan.

The proposed project is also not consistent with many 2040 Comprehensive Plan policies that call for compatibility of new development with the surrounding areas, especially historic areas like this, and careful transition between uses.

2. The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

The proposed building will definitely alter the character of the surrounding area. It will overwhelm the adjacent properties with its height and mass. It is totally out of scale with the surrounding area. The proposed building does NOT provide design features that “break up the scale and mass of the building, reduce the perceived height of the building, and provide transition to the surrounding area” as the staff report suggests. This is the staff opinion, not a statement of verifiable fact. Hundreds of neighborhood residents perceive otherwise.

There is no on-site loading area provided and the project will negatively impact traffic and parking conditions on Grand, St Albans, and the entire neighborhood.

3. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.

There is nothing unique about this property that causes the landowner's "plight."

It is not located on a "prominent" corner and being larger than some other lots should be an asset, affording more options, not fewer, for redevelopment.

The developer has chosen to propose a project that conflicts with the East Grand Avenue Overlay Zone. This is TOTALLY the result of his own actions. The Overlay Zone is not unique to his property. All of Grand Avenue is subject to the Overlay Zone. His "plight" is simply a desire for a greater economic return.

- You denied the rezoning.
- The variances would essentially be a rezoning.
- There are insufficient grounds for granting these variances,

I urge you to be consistent and **DENY** these variances.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Reichert
617 Goodrich Avenue
Saint Paul MN 55102

From: [Peggy Reichert](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Ave- where is the staff report and applicant's submittal?
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:04:29 AM

Dear Zoning Committee

It is now 10 Am on Tuesday, Jul 13, 2021

Public comments on this item are due by Noon, tomorrow, July 14.

But there has yet to be a staff report or the applicant's submission posted on the web site for public review.

This is just crazy. So much for encouraging public involvement.

I am extremely disappointed in your process.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Reichert
617 Goodrich Avenue
St Paul 55102

From: [PRISCILLA BREWSTER](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:12:42 AM

Dear Zoning Committee Secretary,

I am editing my previous email statement to include at the conclusion the specifics of all the reference information.

My residence in Summit Hill is at 10 Crocus Place and has been so for 60 years. I have seen many changes in this neighborhood; Grand Avenue being counted as in the neighborhood. The committee absolutely must enforce existing zone codes. I was told by the tax assessor that this area is the largest stand of Victorian homes in the United States. Please keep that character. The proposed building at 695 Grand is out of scale and inappropriate for the area. A mixed use building within the current building zone rules is acceptable, but with a different design. I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zone rules. Exceptions should NOT be made. This is in reference to ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances.

Most Sincerely,

Priscilla Brewster
prisbrewster@aol.com

On Jul 12, 2021, at 4:22 PM, PRISCILLA BREWSTER
<PRISBREWSTER@AOL.COM> wrote:

Dear Secretary,

My residence in Summit Hill is at 10 Crocus Place and has been so for 60 years. I have seen many changes in this neighborhood; Grand Avenue being counted as in the neighborhood. The committee absolutely must enforce existing zone codes. I was told by the tax assessor that this area is the largest stand of Victorian homes in the United States. Please keep that character. The proposed building at 695 Grand is out of scale and inappropriate for the area. A mixed use building within the current building zone rules is acceptable, but with a different design. I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zone rules. Exceptions should NOT be made.

Most Sincerely,

Priscilla Brewster
prisbrewster@aol.com

RICHARD P. KELLER
23 St. Albans Street South. St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
rpkeller3@gmail.com

July 14, 2021

To: Zoning Committee Secretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
cc: Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Re: Opposition to 695 Grand Rezoning and CUP Variances.
(ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances)

Dear Zoning Committee:

I am a retired lawyer who has lived on St. Albans Street South between Summit and Grand for over 40 years.

People in this neighborhood do not oppose development of the 695 Grand Avenue site as long as it complies with existing rules and regulations, in particular, the East Grand Avenue Overlay District limitations (EGAOD). Almost all of us support the development and construction of more housing within the City, but only in the way that St. Paul has traditionally done so: carefully, thoughtfully, listening to and respecting the voices of both the immediate as well as the extended neighborhood.

The requested variances for 695 Grand represent not an ordinary “adjustment” of applicable rules and regulations, but a complete policy change for what kind of real estate development is permissible on Grand Avenue.

In an earlier decade, idealistic and educated planners and government officials brought forth something called Urban Renewal, and that policy, though lauded at the time, was later recognized as having wrought much ugliness on many communities and, as we now know, even the destruction of some vibrant neighborhoods, such as our own Rondo Avenue. Let’s not repeat the worst of Urban Renewal under the guise of policies of “densification” and “urbanization” and “environmentalism.”

I request that you kindly perform your assigned task of protecting and enhancing the neighborhoods in our City by respecting and following the rules and only make alterations and grant variances after traditional and far more appropriate opportunities for public participation, including comments, questions and discussions in a professionally moderated environment.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Richard Keller

From: [Robert Langford](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Opposition to 695 Grand rezoning and current redevelopment plan
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 2:26:34 PM

To whom it may concern,

- I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies
- I am a Summit Hill resident. **I live at 22 Grotto St. S.** This project will leach value from the neighborhood and give little or nothing in return. Existing zoning codes should be enforced.
- This project is too big and too tall; it is out of character. It will damage the neighborhood and increase traffic and decrease safety for pedestrians in an already very heavily traveled area. Ask the developers to follow existing zoning codes.
- I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules.
- I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

Reference to: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

- **Robert and Colleen Langford, 22 Grotto St. S., St. Paul, MN 55105**

Robert (*Rob*) Langford Jr.

Results Referral Services
Colleen Langford & Associates
RE/MAX Results

651-271-0598 / *cell*
651-698-8006 / *office*
651-698-7686 / *fax*

From: [Robert Langford](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Opposition to 695 Grand rezoning and current redevelopment plan
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 12:26:48 PM

To whom it may concern,

- I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies
- I am a Summit Hill resident. **I live at 22 Grotto St. S.** This project will leach value from the neighborhood and give little or nothing in return. Existing zoning codes should be enforced.
- This project is too big and too tall; it is out of character. It will damage the neighborhood and increase traffic and decrease safety for pedestrians in an already very heavily traveled area. Ask the developers to follow existing zoning codes.
- I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules.
- I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

Robert (*Rob*) Langford Jr.

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[651-698-8006](tel:651-698-8006) / *office*
[651-698-7686](tel:651-698-7686) / *fax*

From: [Rosalyn Goldberg](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Ref# ZF#21-269-061 695 CUP & Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:25:52 AM

I have lived at 1023 Grand Ave, #6, for 40 years. I am a renter, and have worked on Grand in the '80's. Living ON Grand is different than living IN the neighborhood.

I participated in the planning of the East Grand Ave Overlay. This was not taken lightly. It took a long time, with many meetings, and research. ALL stakeholders were represented. DEVELOPERS, businesses, homeowners, renters, the CITY, out of town researchers, and others who cared about Grand Ave. This was not about neighbors against businesses ! Everyone had a voice. We discussed, we voted, we discussed some more, we compromised, we researched. This was not a frivolous endeavor. We wanted to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood, protect everything that attracts people to Summit Hill, the historic architecture, unique shopping experiences, local business owners.

This pedestrian-friendly atmosphere benefits businesses, residents, visitors and developers, alike.

The development proposal for 695 Grand is SO FAR OUT OF COMPLIANCE, it requires double level re-zoning, multiple variances, and a CUP, and it still is out of compliance !!!!! This is OBVIOUSLY outside of what is acceptable on Grand Ave on every front !

The developers knew on DAY ONE, that their proposal was out of compliance on many zoning rules. They NEVER INTENDED to be in compliance. They had years to develop this proposal and a multitude of opportunities to tweak their design and submit a legal plan. They flat out refused. 90% of this neighborhood is against this massive structure. They were informed on multiple occasions what the concerns were. They ignored the elephant in the room. Thumbed their nose at the Overlay Plan. They selfishly, arrogantly, disrespectfully pushed their

proposal through, with no sincere concern for the immediate neighbors. Don't be fooled by their fake, throwaway "compromises". They have continually ignored the real issues. They have no intention of changing anything important, and have said so. This is the same design that is on Snelling and University.

It is your responsibility to uphold the zoning laws of this City. They are there for a reason. They were created for a reason.

This development is wildly out of proportion to the rest of the neighborhood ! Their requests OBVIOUSLY need to be DENYED ! I remind you again, there were developers on the planning committee for the East Grand Ave Overlay. Ironically, people who developed some of the buildings that THESE developers keep referencing.

In addition, this sets a dangerous precedent. As you know, there are other developments on the horizon for Grand Ave. You won't be able

to reel this in.

*There is no reason to grant these requests.
The requests are solely for the selfish wants of
the developer. There is every reason to deny.
It will forever change what Grand Ave is
about. More importantly, it thumbs it's nose at
a legal document that took years to develop.
All stakeholders had a say in that document !*

*Money is better spent developing downtown St.
Paul, which does not exist. That is where this
project belongs and would benefit. Grand Ave
will no longer be the surrogate "downtown".
We are not Snelling and University, or
Uptown. Do not allow spot zoning.*

*This project needs too many exceptions ! It
does not fit. This is a no brainer.*

*Please, please deny these ridiculous requests
!! (BTW: Cafe' Latte' is one of the most
successful businesses in St. Paul. They are
located in a one-story building !!)*

*Respectfully yours,
Lifelong St. Paul resident, and voter
Rosalyn Goldberg
1023 Grand Ave., #6
St. Paul, MN 55105*

From: [Rosalyn Goldberg](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: REF# ZF#21-269-061 695 CUP & variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:45:58 AM

I apologize, but I must share this analogy.

Several years ago, Susan Anton and the NY Rockettes came to Minneapolis (State or Orpheum, forgot) She came on stage and did a bit on how she could never be a Rockette. People were surprised, because she was beautiful, tall with long legs, etc... Then the Rockettes came out. She towered over them. It was totally out of balance. Can you imagine the Rockettes with dancers of varying heights, 5', 6', 7'.... What the Rockettes are about is precision. It would not work if they did not have rules about height. They would not be what they are !! It would change everything. It would be out of balance. Just sayin'....

Thank you for listening and thoughtfully considering.

Rosalyn Goldberg

*1023 Grand Ave., #6
St. Paul, MN 55105*

From: [Roxann Brennan](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Dixie proposal
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 8:45:13 AM

I have lived at 30 St. Albans Street, S #1, since May of 1989.
This proposal is too large for this neighborhood.
This is not about improving the neighborhood and having a legacy. This is just about money.
Why do the needs of many people have to be ignored in the interest of money.
Roxann Brennan
6512317422

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sandor Gallo](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: OPPOSITION ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand/Dixies CUP and Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 3:42:42 PM

Dear Commissioners

I am making public comment in **opposition to the CUP and variances for 695 Grand** Please deny both the CUP and all variances. I also hope that the City Council will deny the rezoning request from B2 to T3, in favor of retaining the B2 or rezoning to the more appropriate T2 (Traditional Neighborhood). The "3" is all about a larger scale project. We have similar issue of out-of-scale buildings down at the West end of Grand, and I support my neighbors to the East.

I would like to bring your attention to the Dissenting Opinion that was published as an "Appendix" within the letter submitted by the Summit Hill Association regarding the rezoning of 695 Grand. There was significant and majority opposition to this proposal, despite the way the vote landed in Summit Hill.

Appendix

In the SHA special board meeting hosted on June 17th, the board also expressed a desire to include dissenting opinions in our recommendation as there are significant differences of opinion on this project.

In general, we support mixed use redevelopment at 695 Grand. The primary objections concerned the excessive building mass, height, scale and insensitive site planning.

The proposed project goes counter to the St Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan policies LU-29 LU-34 LU-35 LU-36 and H-47 ("Saint Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan"), which require compatibility and sensitivity to context regarding building mass, height, scale, design, and required transitions in scale down to adjoining residential districts and property. The building mass, heights, solar orientation and site planning do not conform with required design standards for Traditional Neighborhood. The intensity of T3 is appropriate for major transit and transportation corridors with wider street widths, like University and Snelling. T3 is too intense for a neighborhood scale mixed-use corridor, with a narrow side street that has long standing parking and traffic problems. Both B2 and T2 zoning allow a mixed use project by right, and are supported by the Summit Hill Neighborhood Plan ("Summit Hill / District 16 Neighborhood Plan"). The plan endorses the EGAOD, and T2 design standards (G10, G3). G5 specifically names B2 and lower intensity BC zoning as appropriate for Grand, and calls for the curtailment and more intense zoning such as B3. G6 opposes "rezonings and variances in those areas where parking and traffic problems create undo hardship." Other concerns expressed were the 'human-scale' neighborhood, and concern for negative impacts on the historic districts.

This project should not be allowed to go beyond the zoning requirements of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District, which was designed expressly to limit the height and scale of buildings, as well as limit negative effects from traffic and parking overflows. The proposed development considerably outsizes all prior developments on Grand Avenue, including existing out-of-scale developments like the mid-rise condominium at 745 Grand and Oxford Hill. The developer has not considered a smaller scale project such as others that have been successfully developed on Grand, Selby, University, Lake Street, and throughout the metro.

Included in dissent of rezoning but supportive of adding Household Units including luxury units, is the desire for a standard variance process which can force a compromise with conditions such as that achieved in a recent downtown Stillwater development that included money to be used for municipal parking.

Source, page <https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/Correspondence%20from%20Summit%20Hill%20Association.pdf>

Sandor Gallo
2136 Lincoln Ave.
55105

From: [Shannon O'Toole](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Opposition to ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 2:52:28 PM

Commissioners: **I oppose the granting of a conditional use permit or any variances** for the vastly oversized luxury apartment/retail project planned for 695 Grand Avenue (the "Project"). The Project meets none of the criteria for either a CUP or a variance. The City of St. Paul Code at Section 61.601 provides that a variance may be granted only if the following conditions are met:

The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code. The Project does not meet any of the criteria of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District ("EGAOD"), the applicable zoning for 695 Grand Avenue. The EGAOD was the neighborhood and city's (i) response to buildings that disregarded the character of Grand Avenue and (ii) vision for future development on Grand Avenue. EGAOD limits height and mass and requires T-2 design standards. The variances violate the spirit and the letter of the EGAOD, the present zoning law for East Grand Avenue.

The variance is in harmony with the comprehensive plan. The Project is not in harmony with the 2040 St. Paul Comprehensive Plan which directs that a balance be struck between preserving the history of an area and proposed new development by considering the impact of the Project on the character defining features of the area. (Comp Plan HP-16). This Project fails on many counts: solar orientation; abrupt change in height to adjoining properties; reduction in privacy for neighbors; disregard for historic character of St. Albans Row; the dangerous traffic flow with entrance and exit on St. Albans; and no place for truck deliveries. The Project is inconsistent with the Comp Plan goals and policies contained in LU-1, LU-17, LU-20, LU-29, LU-34, LU-36, Housing Goal 3, H-16, and H-45, to name a few.

The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties. The developer and the owner of the Project have been remarkably candid about economics being the basis of their need for variances, a CUP, and rezoning. They want to build an oversized project to maximize their economic gain. As Peter Kenefick said at the public meeting at which he spoke, "It's five stories or it's nothing." A new building could be built within the criteria of the EGAOD, but it might not bring the economic benefit that Mr. Kenefick and his co-developer seek. The only reason for the requested variances is the economic return to the co-developers.

The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner. The plight of the landowner here is completely of his own making. Instead of

building a building that meets the carefully crafted criteria of the EGAOD, the landowner and his co-developer seek to impose on the space a too tall, too massive building that is better suited to the suburbs. This is a textbook case of the landowner creating the problem he now seeks to avoid via variance.

The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. Even one of the speakers in favor of the rezoning for the Project and the Zoning Committee meeting two weeks ago admitted that the Project would *not be good* for the people who live around it. Not just the people around it, but for the entire neighborhood. The hulking Project will loom over all the other buildings, its hundreds of tenants and retail patrons and their cars will exacerbate the parking problems long associated with the specific St. Albans and Grand area, and it will block the sun for all around it. Rental prices will undoubtedly increase, and the Summit Hill neighborhood's abundant NOAH, naturally occurring affordable housing, will be endangered. Scared away by the parking mess, the retail establishments the neighborhood patronizes will lose all non-neighborhood patrons and will fail. Really the Commission must ask, **in what way will this project NOT affect the essential character of the surrounding area.**

The Project meets none of the conditions required for a variance; the variances must be denied. The CUP fares no better. For a CUP to be granted, the St. Paul City Code at section 61.501 has requirements, none of which the Project meets:

The extent, location and intensity of the use will be in substantial compliance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council. As set forth above, the Project does not substantially comply with the 2040 St. Paul Comprehensive Plan, and it does not comply at all with the EAGOD. It also does not comply with the Summit Hill Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan (the "SHA Plan"). The SHA Plan explicitly discourages rezoning and variances in congested areas, and it explicitly endorses the EAGOD. This Project does nothing for and likely hurts the SHA Plan's diversity goals.

The use will provide adequate ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion on public streets. Ingress and egress via St. Albans, a 32 or 34 foot wide, one way street with fully used parking on both sides of the street, is dangerous, at best. The hundreds of cars per day that will be coming in and out of the Project on St. Albans will be highly hazardous to pedestrians, to bikers, and to cars.

The use will not be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety and general welfare. The traffic will undeniably be increased exponentially thereby endangering pedestrians, bikers, and drivers. The surrounding homes will lose their privacy and sunlight as the Project and its shadow looms over them. This Project could well destroy Grand Avenue and with it the tax base of Grand and its surrounding neighborhood.

The use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district. The EGAOD lays out the normal and orderly development of Grand Avenue. The Project rejects every aspect of the EGAOD and ensures that owners of NOAH and buildings that house the independent businesses for which Grand Avenue is known will look at how to quickly up zone, get easy variances and CUPS, and maximize their own investments to the demise of Grand Avenue.

The use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located. EGAOD contains the applicable regulations; the Project conforms to none of them.

We don't need and we don't want 80 luxury apartments in an overly massive mixed-use building. Today the developer cannot build unless it is 5 floors; next year it will be 7 floors; the year after 11 floors. Developers will always want more without regard for the neighborhood. Please follow the City of St. Paul Code and recommend denial of the variances and the CUP. Thank you.

--

Shannon O'Toole
223 Avon Street South
Saint Paul, MN 55105-3319
612-750-3393
sotoole.esq@gmail.com

From: [Sonja Mason](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Cc: [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#); [Siegworth, Emma \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: OPPOSITION to ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and Variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 1:32:15 PM

Re: OPPOSITION ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand/Dixies CUP and Variances

Commissioners, Councilmembers:

I will be brief and to the point: please oppose the application before you for the CUP and Variances for 695 Grand/Dixies. Deny the CUP and deny all the variances.

(1) Please, commissioners, consider that we can add housing in many forms. There is a groundswell of opposition to these types (this scale) of proposals in neighborhoods generally, and to this specific proposal. We need smaller projects that enhance our neighborhoods. **We need middle density projects that are less expensive per square foot and can deliver housing at a middle price point. We need housing that St Paulites can afford. We need to prevent displacement caused by these oversized luxury developments and preserve our naturally occurring affordable housing.** We need compatible scale projects that will support the attributes that residents, businesses and visitors value about our Saint Paul neighborhoods.

(2) The size and scale of this proposal goes against the 2040 Comp Plan which includes many references to “compatibility,” “reasonable transitions,” and “sensitivity” to the scale of the neighborhood (LU-34, LU-36 H-47 LU-29). This project is the opposite of compatible, reasonable, or sensitive in scale. The fact that the staff report relies on referencing a non-conforming incompatible and out-of-scale 1970s tower at 745 Grand is indicative of the shortcomings of the report. The overlay district was put in place to defend against these inappropriate structures —both the suburban-style mid-rise at 745 Grand as well as the current 695 Grand building, a suburban-style grocery built during the same era. Notably, both these structures were allowed during a time when the City said “yes to anything”—are we doomed to repeat the errors of the past, but on an even larger, more damaging scale this time? Please, commissioners, don’t destroy the uniquely urban, **middle scale** of our pre-1940s neighborhoods. This scale of multifamily family housing is also called “Missing Middle,” since it was prohibited many years by many cities (including St Paul), is featured on page 138 of the 2040 Comp Plan. Let’s stop missing it.

(3) The staff report supporting these variances is based largely on a rezoning that is not granted. This is backwards, and I believe illegal. We the public were also told two weeks ago at the rezoning hearing, that we could not comment on the size. Now, the rezoning is being used to support the size we were not allowed to object to at that time. Moreover, city ordinance is very clear that when there is conflict between zoning provisions, the more restrictive rules apply. The East Grand Avenue Overlay is law, and it was put in place to protect the historic scale of Grand Avenue, and the Summit Hill neighborhood it belongs to. **The EG was developed as a manner to preserve the historic and essential character of the neighborhood, in place of involving the more stringent restrictions of the local heritage preservation district, located just across**

the narrow alley. While there are some who believe this overlay needs to be revised, it is current ordinance and it was, in fact, supported by a strong majority (78%) in a recent (Feb-March 2021) survey by the District Council.

The Staff report has several more errors of finding, but I promised to be brief, and, frankly, the amount of time we have between its release (yesterday) and the end of public comment (today) is entirely inadequate. I am hopeful others will articulate further the errors of finding, and I urge you to read those.

(4) Please, commissioners, take the time to review the **impressive work by your fellow commissioner, Jake Reilly.** Please thoroughly read his analysis of the inappropriateness of T3 rezoning, which is all based on how the “3” of Traditional Neighborhood “T3” relates to the scale and size; as well as his observations that hint toward variance standards, "If we were to look at other concepts we consider when making zoning decisions, such as practical difficulties or an unnecessary/undue hardship under the existing zoning, I would not feel comfortable approving it because hardship/practical difficulty situations can not be financial in nature and that is the only concern I have been made aware of through the developer and landowner’s testimony.” The variances are too far beyond what is allowed in the immediate area and will result in damaging adverse impacts. There is no statutory justification for them. The scale is too much.

(5) Please, commissioners, take the time to review the **League of Minnesota Cities** guide to variances, conditional use permits, and zoning. “A variance may be granted if enforcement of a zoning ordinance provision as applied to a particular piece of property would cause the landowner “practical difficulties.” -*League of Minnesota Cities (1)*

There are no practical difficulties caused by this level, relatively large city lot. This application does not pass the "three factor test" outlined by LMC.

Further, the required conditions, both general and specific, are not being met for the CUP. This, too, has been well detailed in public comment, including at least two letters from legal counsel, which I encourage the Commission to review with due care.

"Ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger” -*League of Minnesota Cities (4)*

Sincerely,

Sonja Mason
21 Saint Albans St. S.

*Resident and voter in Ward 2
Small business person & property owner in Wards 1 & 6
St Paul Central Alumna
Mother of two St Paulites
Multifamily Resident*

*Volunteer for many orgs, but only representing myself right now
I have worked, schooled, or lived (at least two) in all seven of St Paul's Wards*

References: League of Minnesota Cities:

- (1) <https://macgrove.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/League-of-MN-Cities-Land-Use-Variances-01.11.19.pdf>
- (2) <https://www.lmc.org/news-publications/magazine/sep-oct-2020/lotl-sep20/>
- (3) <https://www.lmc.org/resources/zoning-decisions/>
- (3) https://www.leg.mn.gov/docs/2015/other/150681/PFEISref_1/League%20of%20Minnesota%20Cities%202011.pdf
- (4) <https://www.lmc.org/resources/land-use-conditional-use-permits/>

From: [Stephen Gadiant](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Cc: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [#CI-StPaul_Council](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 4:01:51 PM

Hello,

My name is Stephen Gadiant and I have lived at 809 Lincoln Avenue since 1978. During that time I have witnessed the many changes that have occurred along the Grand Avenue corridor. I am opposed to the proposed redevelopment at 695 Grand Avenue. This project is too big and too tall for the area in question. The provisions for residential and customer parking are totally unrealistic and inadequate, and the increased traffic flow along Grand Avenue and the adjacent side streets would be very detrimental the surrounding neighborhood. I am supportive of mixed use development that would comply with current zoning regulations for the east Grand Avenue overlay district, but I am not supportive of exceptions or variances to the current zoning restrictions for this area of Grand Avenue. Thank you for your consideration.

Stephen Gadiant
809 Lincoln Ave
St Paul, MN 55105

Sent from my iPad

From: [Stahlin99](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: 695 Grand Project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 12:57:23 PM

We, Steven Usitalo and Margarita Aroutiunian-Usitalo, are residents of the condo across St. Albans from the proposed development at 695 Grand Avneue. We will limit our letter to noting that we are not opposed to the height of the new complex, or its overall positioning (and support whatever bureaucratic hurdles must be overcome to achieve this). Would we have supported a smaller, shorter, structure, yes, but we support the proposed project. It may well cause us inconveniences in our individual parking, but we'll try to overcome that first-world complaint - after all, we believe the project will be a net benefit for the overall area, whatever minor inconveniences it might cause us.

While we have some quibbles with the excessive optimism of the developers, we do believe the project will improve the tax base of the city, and add to the density of the area in a beneficial way.

Best

Steven Usitalo & Margarita Aroutiunian-Usitalo

30 Saint Albans Street South, no. 2
Saint Paul, MN
55105

We were asked to supply the zoning case number. We have no idea what that is.

ZF#21-269-061

Protest letter to 695 Grand Avenue Development as proposed w variances. I am against changing the all existing zoning regulations.

July 12th, 2021

Friends:

St Paul's Summit Hill is a treasured example of preserved American architecture. A walking tour of this gorgeous venue attracts visitors from around the world. For over a century and more, community leadership has shaped and financially supported the distinctive architectural development and cultural quality of St.Paul --- creating and nurturing its very soul.

With the onslaught of new development, there is no better time than now to preserve the architectural design standards and to preserve this historical legacy. While there is excitement about potential development, it is critical that all new construction is in harmony and balance with existing structures.

Surrounding and servicing landmark residences on Summit Avenue, Grand Hill, Ramsey Hill, and areas further west, Grand Avenue is the "main street" of the historic Crocus Hill/ Summit Hill. Saint Albans Street South, a narrow street lined with beautiful historic buildings, often prominently featured in promotional material for Saint Paul, connects Summit Avenue to Grand Avenue from North to South on the east end of Grand Avenue. Narrow under the best conditions, heavily trafficked and essentially impassable in winter, Saint Albans Street South was designated a one-way street in the 1980s.

Parking, as observed, is presently at 85-100 per cent. In addition, this small area is among the most densely populated of Saint Paul neighborhoods. Neighborhood housing is an eclectic mix of commerce, entertainment as well as both single and multipurpose dwellings. Presently in need of major revitalization, it is critical that Grand Avenue be viewed as a whole with standards set by an overall plan that includes critical zoning and building standards

Saint Albans Street South, a narrow street lined with beautiful historic buildings, often prominently featured in promotional material for Saint Paul, connects Summit Avenue to Grand Avenue from North to South on the east end of Grand Avenue. Narrow under the best conditions, heavily trafficked and essentially impassable in winter, Saint Albans Street South was designated a one-way street in the 1980s. Parking, as observed, is presently at 85-100 per cent. In addition, this small area is among the most densely populated of Saint Paul neighborhoods.

Less than one block from historic Summit Avenue, cornering Saint Albans Street South, Orono based restaurateur **Peter Kenefick, in collaboration with Reuter Walton, a Saint Louis Park-based development company and Minneapolis based ESG Architecture & Design, propose to pierce the heart of this crowded historic corner of Saint Paul by inserting a five-story, massive, mixed-use structure, against the loud protests of residents of the neighborhood and Grand Avenue. An architectural intrusion into this historic area, the proposed "copy cat" building design seen in much of new "suburbia" is cheap and out of context to the quality of the landmark design in the surrounding neighborhood.**

The proposed development is almost double the size of the Oxford Hill condo development which, in 2005, resulted in so much neighborhood opposition that it resulted in the East Grand Avenue Overlay

District, which became part of the zoning code in 2006, limiting heights to three stories/ thirty six feet, and a maximum footprint of 25,000 square feet. **As proposed, the 695 Grand Avenue project will create significant spillover problems with traffic, street parking and alley congestion. Tall shadows created will diminish the livability of surrounding properties.**

This letter expresses major concerns related to the many negative impacts, raised by a group of neighbors in the blocks nearest to the 695 Grand Avenue project, but also those from far beyond. **Individual major development that requires zoning and critical policy change for construction sets a dangerous, negative precedent for all future development on Grand.**

The **objections to the massive size of the building and the resulting negative impacts were essentially ignored at public presentation by the development team and city officials on multiple occasions from April 8th until the present.** The response to requests by neighbors to consider decreasing the size were met by Peter Kenefick, the current property owner, with an adamant, "I won't be a part of that", stating that it was the only design "that worked". While some changes put forward addressed traffic flow, they were primarily cosmetic and **did not address the lack of appropriate transition to an historic residential neighborhood.**

The proposed mixed-use development will cover the entire area that presently houses Dixie's, Emmett's and Saji-Ya restaurants – as well as the existing surface parking lot. The addition of 79 expensive residential units will create hard ship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors due to the increased use of off-street parking. Additionally, it will only be setback eight feet from a narrow alley--- further taxing an already overused traffic way.

Most critical, the proposed building will not be in compliance with present zoning and design codes of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District. The developers intend to request a zoning variance (for +60% in height +20% footprint).

If built, this development would forever alter the essential character of an area which is prized in St. Paul and well beyond Minnesota for its historic character, sense of place, charm and the resulting appeal which makes it one of the most visited neighborhoods in the state.

The building as proposed is too tall, too massive and dense, and completely out of character with the historic, pedestrian-friendly, and walkable nature of the neighborhood. In addition to taking light and air—increasing traffic and noise—the developers threaten to plant an architectural anomaly in the heart of an historic area!

Respectfully submitted,

Susan St. John

25 South Saint Albans Street

Enclosed is a photo of Saint Albans Row --- one of saint Paul's most visited historic sites -- now threatened by big box the development project planned for 695 Grand Ave by Kenefick/development team

From: [privateartmn](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 12:15:32 PM
Attachments: [Protest Letter - Saint Albans Row 1880 Clarence Johnson, architect.png](#)

Attached please find an image of historic St Albans Row built in 1880 by St Paul architect Clarence Johnson. This building as well as the others on St Albans will have major affects from this proposed overwhelming big box development.

Susan St John

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone



From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixies
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:53:52 AM

From: val cohn <VALCOHN@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:40 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Dixies

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Please adhere to the current zoning laws. Don't let this project go forward.
Val Cohn
829 Lincoln

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