



## Saint Paul Planning Commission

### Notice to Commissioners and the public:

The chair of the Planning Commission has determined that it is not practical nor prudent for the Planning Commission and its Committees to meet in-person or pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 13D.02. In light of the COVID-19 health pandemic, it is not feasible for any member of Planning Commission to be present at the regular location, and all members of the Planning Commission will attend this meeting by telephone or other electronic means.

It is also not feasible for members of the public to attend the meeting at its regular location due to the health pandemic and emergency. Accordingly, no meeting will be held in City Hall Conference Center Room 40 at 15 W. Kellogg Boulevard.

### Minutes July 9, 2021

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, July 9, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. remotely or by telephone.

**Commissioners Present:** Mmes. Anderson, DeJoy, Grill, Kantner, Mitchell, Presley, Thomas, Underwood; and Messrs. Baker, Hood, Holst, McMurtrey, Moore, Rangel Morales, Reilly, Risberg, Syed, Taghioff, and Yang.

**Commissioners Absent:** None.

**Also Present:** Luis Pereira, Planning Director; Yaya Diatta, Department of Safety and Inspections, Allan Torstenson, Emma Siegworth, Tony Johnson, Menaka Mohan, Michael Wade, Addison Vang, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

#### I. Chair's Announcements

Chair Rangel Morales had no announcements.

#### II. Planning Director's Announcements

Luis Pereira announced that the Department of Planning and Economic Development is looking to hire a Deputy Director.

Mr. Pereira welcomed back Reconnect Rondo to the Planning Commission. Noted on the agenda Reconnect Rondo presented to the Commission almost two years ago, on July 12, 2019. This time

joined by Reconnect Executive Director, Mr. Keith Baker, along with their board chair Mr. Martin Anderson.

### III. Zoning Committee

**SITE PLAN REVIEW** – List of current applications. (*Tia Anderson, 651/266-9086*)

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

#21-271-810 695 Grand Rezoning - Rezone from B2 Community Business District and EG East Grand Avenue Overlay District to T3 Traditional Neighborhood District without the EG East Grand Overlay District. 695 Grand Avenue, NW corner at St. Albans Street (*Emma Siegworth, 651-266-6657*)

Emma Siegworth gave a presentation that can be viewed on the webpage at:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/695%20Grand%20PC%20Presentation%2007.09.21.pdf>

Chair Rangel Morales announced that this is not a public hearing today; it is a conversation about the Zoning Committee recommendation and a chance to ask questions, understand the staff's position and understand those who voted for and against. The public hearing was held last Thursday, July 1<sup>st</sup> and the purpose for this Planning Commission meeting is to vote on the motion coming out of the Zoning Committee, which is to approve.

Commissioner Reilly voted against the rezoning at Zoning Committee, and he read the document with his reasons for doing so. This document is provided and [located here](#).

Commissioner Taghioff said that the project does overall merit a rezoning and supports the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the District 16 Summit Hill Association Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner McMurtrey said that knowing that there is a substantial number of folks who voiced their opposition to this project, he wants a better sense of what those conversations have been with the community and if there are any aspects of the project that have addressed any of the concerns brought up by the community.

In response to Commissioner McMurtrey, Chair Rangel Morales said there has been a lot of community dialogue between the developer and members of the District Council. When they presented it on Thursday, they had a list of items that were changed based on community input.

Commissioner Baker agreed and said that there were changes in the overall scale and size of the project and the developer discussed the feasibility and cost issue with potentially making the building smaller.

Commissioner Grill said that the public comments generally addressed both the rezoning case and the conditional use permit and variances case. She said the T3 zoning meets a lot of the land use goals of the City, that a T project fits with in with the combination of business and RM zoning. She said that the regulations of the surrounding buildings that are already there, but for the overlay, allow for the same size and scale of the proposed building.

Commissioner Taghioff said that the public engagement process lasted almost five months with multiple public meetings. He said that the comments the Summit Hill Association received were mixed and the themes are not binary. There were comments of concerns about scale, but very few people were opposed to redevelopment altogether. He said that there is a stronger meeting of minds than is suggested by the count of comments, and the Summit Hill Association letter discusses the issues and tradeoffs well. The Board looked very carefully at the concerns and what has been done by the developer to address these

concerns. The focus of the board throughout has been to listen to address these concerns and secure real intangible site plan changes in response to them, which he feels has been done.

Commissioner Reilly said that it was disingenuous to suggest that a rezoning can be separated from the items (the conditional use permit and variances) because the reasons for the zoning district are to set up density and dimensional standards and use. The rezoning decision is different because it goes with the property and has nothing to do necessarily with the building itself, whereas the other items are directly associated with the building.

In response to Chair Rangel Morales, Ms. Siegworth said the major distinction between recommending approval of the rezoning to T3 and denial of taking the property outside of the overlay district was the policy in the Summit Hill District 16 Plan about adopting the overlay district which includes the height limits. Staff thought that because of that policy, rezoning to outside of the overlay district was not consistent with that plan and therefore that was not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Rangel Morales said that he found it conflicting to say that they should allow T3 zoning as if this overlay district doesn't exist. He said that the entire purpose of the overlay is to be more restrictive and the Summit Hill Association revisions to the overlay may allow for this type of zoning. If staff is recommending not to allow for removal from the overlay, he finds it conflicting to say that T3 zoning is allowed under the traditional zoning requirements as if there was no overlay. But because there is an overlay, they can't approve it under the overlay portion.

In response to Chair Rangel Morales, Ms. Siegworth said that there are two kinds of paths to getting out of the overlay district: one is rezoning to outside of the overlay district and that staff found to be not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the other way is to get out of it with variances, which is path that the applicant is taking and the application which will be at Zoning Committee next week.

In response to Commissioner Kantner, Ms. Siegworth said that rezoning out of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District is done just as any other rezoning, going through the process with the Planning Commission and then going to the City Council for a zoning amendment. She said she could not find any examples of rezoning out of an overlay district, but there are several examples of variances from overlay districts. However, there are not overlay districts that are as restrictive as the East Grand Avenue Overlay District.

In response to Chair Rangel Morales, Ms. Siegworth said the nearest T3 zoning district is at Dale and Selby, which is a few blocks north.

In response to Commissioner Reilly, Ms. Siegworth said the applicant originally had considered rezoning to T2, but their building required more height than T2 permits. In T2, 35 feet is permitted by right and a maximum height of 45 feet may be permitted with a conditional use permit. T3 zoning districts permits greater heights at 55 feet.

Commissioner Taghioff said that the conflict of districts is a normal condition for the neighborhood because there is a variety of underlying districts and the overlay district imposes further restrictions. He said that he agrees with the staff recommendation because when you zone out of the overlay district, it's really saying these rules no longer apply to me, which fatally undermines the legislative intent of the overlay district that is not only in the 2006 Neighborhood Plan as a visionary statement, but it was adopted as an official control. The variances are specific to the building and the developer is forced to prove that they can conform to the underlying spirit or legislative intent, while exceeding certain technical limits, which is why the SHA Board felt more comfortable with the developer achieving this through variances.

Chair Rangel Morales said he tends to agree with Commissioner Reilly because when you look at the site in isolation, it is not on a major transit corridor, the nearest T3 zoning is in the Selby-Dale area, which is not immediately nearby, and it doesn't seem like T3 makes sense. For him, it seems like for other Commissioners, not considering the variances made it easier for them to vote that this is appropriate rezoning, but to him, staff saying it meets the T3 intent and goals of the rest of the city, but it doesn't meet the overlay district does undermine the overlay district. Whether he agrees with the overlay is a different question. He thinks that the rezoning in and of itself does undermine the overlay district and if they have to consider the variances in order to get the rezoning, then that's a problem.

Commissioner Baker said he is hearing that what they are about to vote on should not happen this way and that the two cases (the rezoning case this week and the conditional use permit and variances case next week) should be together. He feels like there is now concern about their ability to vote on the cases separately.

Chair Rangel Morales said that he thinks it is possible to differentiate between the rezoning case and the conditional use permit and variances case and the two matters can be handled separately. It is hard for him to get to "this is appropriate on this overlay district" without considering the reasons that Commissioner Taghioff brought up. It may be possible that he turned his vote into a yes if he was to start considering the variances and how it all shapes into the area and whether it follows the spirit of the overlay district. But because they are asked to separate the cases, he doesn't think that the rezoning in and of itself would apply.

Ms. Siegworth said that the decision to vote on the rezoning could be pushed to occur when the decision for the variances and conditional use permit decision would occur, but rezonings often happen before plans for specific buildings are made. Rezonings also have to go to City Council for final decision, which is why it made sense to start this rezoning process before the variances and the conditional use permit case.

Commissioner Kantner said that she thinks it is important to keep these two issues separate. The zoning runs with the land and the variances run with the building. She thinks that the current B2 zoning does not make sense at this location. The B2 zoning is more restrictive zone than the overlay district, and if they rezone to T3, the most restrictive would be the overlay districts. T3 does raise the base level of what they would need variances for and it makes sense to keep these two issues separate.

Commissioner Reilly said that he agrees that they should take the cases separately. For him, the issue hinges on the type of structure that can be built on T3 versus T2, which is the major difference regardless of what happens with the actual structure itself down the road. It's what is possible, not what is probable or proposed or likely.

***MOTION: Commissioner Baker moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning B2 to T3, and to deny the rezoning out of EG East Grand Overlay District. The motion carried 16-2 (Rangel Morales, Reilly) on a roll call vote.***

Commissioner Baker announced the items on the agenda at the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, July 15, 2021.

**IV. Informational Update from Reconnect Rondo** – Update by Keith Baker, Executive Director, and Marvin Anderson, Board Chair, Reconnect Rondo.

Mr. Keith Baker and Mr. Marvin Anderson gave an update which can be viewed on the web page at: <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/planning/planning-commission>

Commissioner DeJoy said that this presentation is inspiring as the Planning Commission has followed this vision from the start, she sees it really starting to take shape as a feasible master plan. She thanked Mr. Baker and Mr. Anderson for virtually walking them through this plan. The commitment to this development is so important and will certainly be part of the legacy in the City of Saint Paul. She is looking forward to more presentations as this develops further.

Commissioner Presley is a descendant of Rondo and know about the pain and loss, wealth, and the historical generational wealth that I-94 caused in the Rondo community where she lived and grew up in. She commends all the work of Reconnect Rondo having been involved in and a lot of the community engagement. She is working and consulting with the Rondo Roundtable to get it back up in a more organized. Commissioner Presley has a self-interest in this project being successful.

Commissioner Syed thanked Mr. Baker and Mr. Anderson for bringing this as he is a Rondo neighbor and has been for over 20 years. Again he thanked them for doing this work and looks forward to seeing this through.

Chair Rangel Morales thanked them for taking the time to provide them with an update as they have heard from them since the beginning and it is really inspiring to see the project develop. He wishes them the best and looks for future presentations from them and updates on the progress that they've made on the Reconnect Rondo Bridge Project.

Mr. Baker thanked the Chair and said he appreciates the opportunity to present and looks forward to updating the Planning Commission as things progress.

#### **V. Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee**

Menaka Mohan, PED staff said that they have no upcoming meetings scheduled. The Homeless Services Zoning Study has been delayed and there is nothing on the agenda for a couple of weeks.

#### **VI. Transportation Committee**

Commissioner Risberg said that the meeting on Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup> has been canceled and the next scheduled meeting is Monday, July 26, 2021 at 4:30p.m.

#### **VII. Communications-Nominations Committee**

Commissioner Underwood had no report.

#### **VIII. Task Force/Liaison Reports**

Commissioner DeJoy poste the website address for the updates of the Hillcrest Master Plan in the chat for those that want to get caught up. They have not met since the last Planning Commission meeting and their July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting is postponed, so their next scheduled meeting is August 17, 202. For updates: <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/planning/hillcrest-golf-course-master-plan/hillcrest>

Commissioner Grill announced that the Riverview Stationary Task Force has a meeting on Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 p.m. On the agenda is the local economic conditions, look at local market conditions, information on station technologies and an engineering update. If interested in listening in on that meeting the information available on the ramseycounty.us website under Riverview Corridor.

#### **IX. Old Business**

None.

**X. New Business**

None.

**XI. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

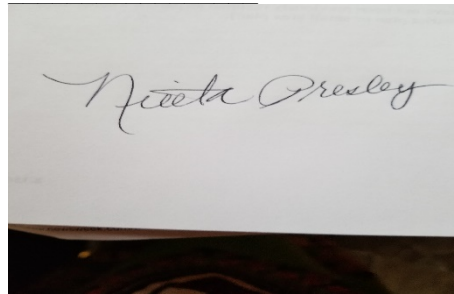
Recorded and prepared by  
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary  
Planning and Economic Development Department,  
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

*Luis Pereira*

Luis Pereira  
Planning Director

Approved September 3, 2021  
(Date)

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature reads "Nieeta Presley" in a cursive script. The photo is taken from a slightly low angle, showing the top of the signature and the top edge of a dark surface below it.

Nieeta Presley  
Secretary of the Planning Commission