

HILLCREST COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

December 17, 2021

Saint Paul Planning Commission:

On behalf of the Hillcrest Community Advisory Committee (CAC), we would like to convey the CAC's comments on the draft Hillcrest Master Plan being brought forward for your consideration. Our CAC consisted of 11 members appointed by Mayor Carter, including residents of both Saint Paul and Maplewood, and subject matter experts on housing, transportation, and business. Our membership is diverse and reflective of the area's demographics. Our responsibilities included connecting other people from the community in the process, providing constructive input, and raising issues and opportunities for the project. We met 18 times from October 2019 through December 2021, discussing the site background, community engagement, and other topics contained in the attached master plan. Early in the process we affirmed 20 community priorities to guide the plan, which came from careful evaluation of the community engagement results and study of the demographics and data provided to the CAC. On December 14, 2021, the CAC authorized this letter to be sent on their behalf.

Generally, we support the master plan's direction. In particular, we appreciate how the master plan:

- **Achieves the development goals of approximately 1,000 jobs and 1,000 households.** The master plan sets helpful priorities for affordable housing provision on the site, both rental and ownership. We are encouraged that many of the employment opportunities will provide low barrier to entry living wage jobs.
- **Takes community input into proper account.** Engagement was intentionally demographically representative of the area, aided by special events created to intentionally reach targeted groups. We adapted to the virtual environment during the pandemic.
- **Recognizes the site as a neighborhood node**, with a concentration of activity and destinations provided within walking distance of new and existing neighbors. This includes the new City park at the node, with good access to it from all directions.
- **Provides walkability to support public health** with its sidewalks and trails connecting through the site to and from the surrounding area. The walking network is well integrated into the neighborhood.
- **Has thoughtful transportation connections to the west**, with jogs at Howard Street to discourage cut-through traffic across the site.
- **Encourages community agriculture to provide healthy food.** Currently, the neighborhood is a healthy food desert.

Also, as the master plan suggests, we encourage Metro Transit to consider providing public transit to the site to take advantage of synergies with this transit-oriented development.

Our biggest concerns with the draft master plan are that:

- **There is too much range given for administrative modifications** to the plan, including but not limited to: land uses and trails, tree replacement, type of housing, and placement of all uses as presented in the master plan, which could be changed to a degree we are not comfortable with. We hope to see the actual development be reflective of what is in the plan.
- **Important plan aspects regarding sustainability and art are asterisked as being funding dependent.**
- **We will miss the site's high point and the trees, but recognize that the development will remove many of them due to the remediation of the site's pollution.**

We understand that this master plan could change through the Planning Commission and City Council public processes, but we feel confident that this letter is a reflection of our committee's position on the master plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our input.

Anne DeJoy

Anne DeJoy
Co-chair

Linda Martinez-Higgins

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