



Payne-Phalen

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

567 Payne Avenue, St. Paul MN 55130 www.paynephalen.org 651-774-5234 district5@paynephalen.org

February 23, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Zoning Committee of the St. Paul Planning Commission
c/o Bill Dermody, Senior Planner
25 West 4th Street, 1400 City Hall Annex
St. Paul, MN 55102
RE: Rezoning application – 597 East 7th Street

Dear Zoning Committee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council. Our Board met in community in our regular online meeting last night - Tuesday, February 22, 2022. One of the items on the agenda was the application to rezone the property at 597 East 7th Street from I1 light industrial to T2 traditional neighborhood. The Applicant, Keyf Abdi, did not attend the meeting; her architect John Anderson did attend. John did not have a presentation prepared for the meeting, but he stood for questions, and there were many.

Based on their review of the Application packet sent by the City and their conversation with Mr. Anderson last night:

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted against supporting** the application to the City for this project.*

Furthermore, PPCC's Board calls upon City officials to take into full consideration the issues of capacity, building design, site design, traffic impacts, and public safety at this very complicated intersection.

The Board also urges City staff to conduct a full site plan review and to actually visit this site in-person to consider and address the challenges for safety design at this particular location and at this particular intersection.

The Board had concerns about (1) the design and capacity of the daycare space, (2) concerns about the design and capacity of the outdoor spaces onsite, and (3) concerns about the lack of planning involved in preparing for public safety (both onsite and offsite) given the high level of traffic and congestion generated by the proposed use.

Concerns about the design and capacity of the daycare space:

- The Board expressed concern that there are no windows in the daycare space. John said that there is a plan to cut-in new windows to the building walls along the East 7th and Payne Avenue facades. The Board expressed concern that this was not in the application or plans submitted to the City or PPCC.
- John was not able to answer questions about how many children would be using the daycare facility. He said that that number would be up to state law, but he said that he is designing to accommodate 60 children. The Board had many concerns about that many children in such a small space.
- One of the Board members pointed out that the drawings show stairs and wondered about the basement. It was only at that point in the meeting that John revealed that there would also be a full floor of daycare facilities in the basement. The Board was surprised and unprepared for this revelation – one that was not shared upfront. The Board expressed a high-level of concern that this information was not provided in the application or plans submitted to the City or PPCC.

Concerns about the design and capacity of the outdoor spaces onsite:

- The board brought up concerns about the complicated and heavily trafficked intersection, the number of cars that would need to be accommodated on site for drop-off and pick-up of small children. The parking lot is small and has no clear traffic flow. There is no curbside parking at this site and pedestrian facilities at this intersection and adjacent to this site are inadequate.
- The Board was especially concerned about the realities of small children bolting during pick up and drop off. To this, Mr. Anderson said they would be happy to install a fence. Again, the Board expressed concern that this condition was not anticipated nor was information provided in the application or plans submitted to the City or PPCC.
- John noted that meals at the daycare facility would be provided by an offsite catering service and that the loading dock would be used for trucks backing up into the site to provide catering. John also noted that the loading dock would also be used for the other businesses on the site. Board members expressed concern that trucks coming and going to this small parking lot would complicate the movement of cars coming and going to drop-off children throughout the day.
- Board members asked about whether there would be any playground space onsite. John said that a shuttle bus would be coming and going to take children to an offsite recreation facility – though he was not able to say where that facility is and how often shuttles would come and go. Board members expressed concern that shuttle busses and trucks coming and going to this small parking lot would complicate the movement of cars onsite that are dropping-off and picking-up children throughout the day.

Concerns about the lack of planning involved in preparing for a high level of traffic and congestion generated by this proposal:

- Board members expressed concern that the combination of cars (for pick-up and drop-off of 60 students), shuttle busses, and truck deliveries all coming and going to and from this small parking lot would cause complications that spill out onto nearby streets and sidewalks and that would cause unsafe traffic congestion throughout the day.
- To this, John said that while cars would be coming and going throughout the day, he expects that there would be a “surge” of cars coming and going at 7:45 a.m. and at 5 p.m. The Board was concerned that spill-over congestion at peak rush hour traffic would be unsustainable at this complicated intersection.
- Of particular note, the Board expressed great alarm that there were no measures proposed for how all of the pedestrian, car, bus, and truck traffic generated by this use would work relative to the fire station which is across the street from the facility! The Board was especially weary to find out that no particular plans for safety precautions are proposed to protect families and children coming and going while the fire department was also coming and going on emergency calls.

In sum, PPCC does not support the application by JDA Design for a rezoning to operate a day care facility at this address. We support day care facilities generally and recognize the need. In this case however, if approved as is currently designed, this particular application would be unsafe and highly detrimental to the neighborhood.

Please include this letter in the packet of materials for the public hearing. We are grateful to the Zoning Committee for taking the position of the Payne-Phalen Community Council into full consideration as you make your decision. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Sincerely,



Jack Byers, Executive Director

cc. John Anderson, JDA Design, Applicant
City Council President Amy Brendmoen, Ward 5
Councilmember Jane Prince, Ward 7
Luis Pereira, Planning Director
Tia Anderson, Department of Safety and Inspections
Paul Dubruiel, Department of Safety and Inspections
Damian Schaab, Don Lorr, and Robin Rivard, Co-Chairs, Railroad Island Neighborhood Group
Rebecca Nelson, PPCC Board President
PPCC Board of Directors