

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 5, 2024 - 3:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor
City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard

PRESENT: Grill, Hood, Ochoa, Syed, and Taghioff
EXCUSED: Starling
STAFF: Kady Dadlez, Bill Dermody, Samantha Langer, and Josh Ladd

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Taghioff.

Macalester College Rezoning (T2 to RM1 & VP) - 24-095-842 - Rezone from T2 traditional neighborhood to RM1 multiple family (1655 & 1661 Grand and 37 Macalester) and from T2 traditional neighborhood to VP vehicle parking (53, 57, 63 Macalester) at 1655 and 1661 Grand Avenue and 37, 53, 57, 63 Macalester Street

Macalester College CUP - 24-095-844 - Conditional use permit for expansion of campus boundary and modification of setback requirements to allow front yard setbacks of 0-10 feet along Grand Avenue between Cambridge and Macalester Streets; setback of 50 feet required at 1655, 1661, 1679 Grand, north side between Cambridge and Macalester Streets

Kady Dadlez presented the staff reports with a recommendation of approval for the rezoning, conditional use permit, and modification. She said District 14 submitted a letter recommending approval, and there were 5 letters in support, and 0 letters in opposition.

Commissioner Hood asked about a previous case involving a University of St. Thomas surface parking at the northwest corner of Grand and Cleveland and asked why staff is recommending to rezone in this instance rather than a conditional use permit. He also asked why this wouldn't be considered spot zoning.

Ms. Dadlez said she didn't have the particulars of the previous case he mentioned and thinks it may have been an interim use for parking. She said vehicular parking is its own stand alone zoning and we wouldn't be facing an issue as far as spot zoning is concerned. She noted that the VP district is intended to permit the establishment of off-street parking facilities to serve a use district that has developed without adequate off-street parking, adding that the commercial district along Grand Avenue developed without adequate off-street parking.

Mr. Dermody added that spot zoning is not only about labels on the map, but also the uses. This is parking in a mixed use commercial area with other parking. There is a comprehensive plan issue to take into account that staff has evaluated in the staff report about whether stand alone parking should be encouraged and came to the conclusion that in this specific instance it should be allowed.

Ms. Dadlez said it is essentially switching the location of a parking lot from the north side of Grand to the south side. It's new to the site, but not new to the immediate area. There is a need and a desire to provide off-street parking for businesses on the south side of Grand Avenue.

Chair Taghioff asked why the parking couldn't be addressed with a conditional use permit rather than a rezoning.

Mr. Dermody said that a conditional use permit is needed in residential districts for campus uses and this parking lot may be used partially by the campus, but it will also be used for the surrounding businesses. It has a broader use than only for the campus.

In response to Commissioner Ochoa's questions on why rezoning to this district was proposed, Ms. Dadlez said the design of the development will cross property lines and they want all of the zoning to be the same for the entire development site so the dimensional standards are the same for the site as well. College campuses are regulated with a conditional use permit when they are in residential zoning districts. We don't have a CUP for colleges in T districts. By rezoning to RM1 it is a way to expand their campus boundary and add more residential zoning to their already largely residential campus. Ms. Dadlez said that as part of the conditional use permit to expand the campus boundary a greater height is allowed for campus buildings than is allowed in the underlying zoning.

In response to Chair Taghioff, Ms. Dadlez said we have universities in many areas of our city and we encourage them, but they can have impacts on neighborhoods. A CUP is away of regulating the impacts that the neighborhood may experience and that is the reason for CUPs in residentially zoned districts.

Chair Taghioff asked how a coffee shop use is allowed in RM1 zoning district, and asked if RM1 is the correct zoning for this area. Ms. Dadlez said that the coffee shop is part of the welcome center and part of the residence hall, and happens to be open to the public. She added that there is a coffee shop in a building on the Hamline University campus, which is zoned H2. She said a number of things were considered by the college before arriving upon the decision to rezone to RM1. They wanted the zoning of the entire redevelopment site to be the same. To rezone from residential to commercial would require a petition signed by two-thirds of the property owners within 100 feet of the entire campus and the number of eligible signatures would be more than a hundred; this was considered onerous. Rezoning to RM1 would allow the campus to be regulated by the campus conditional use permit, it would allow for the use, and they would be able to get the height that they needed for the new building.

Deanna Sepanen, Highwinds Fund for Macalester College, said she understands that that this is a complex block and they didn't arrive at this proposal without a lot of discussion. They are excited to invest in their campus and the city.

No one spoke in support or opposition. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Grill moved approval of the rezoning. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

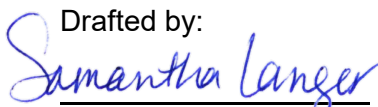
The motion passed by a vote of 5-0-0.


Adopted Yeas - 5 Nays - 0 Abstained - 0

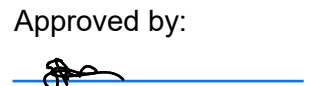
Commissioner Ochoa moved approval of the conditional use permit and modification. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of 4-0-1.

Adopted Yeas - 4 Nays - 0 Abstained - 1 (Taghioff)

Drafted by:

Samantha Langer
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:

Kady Dadlez (Dec 20, 2024 09:26 CST)
Kady Dadlez
City Planner

Approved by:

Simon Taghioff (Dec 23, 2024 17:59 CST)
Simon Taghioff
Chair