

ZONING COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

1. **FILE NAME:** Appeal of Luther Seminary South Campus Improvements **FILE #** 19-106-417
 2. **APPELLANT:** Meri Hauge **HEARING DATE:** January 16, 2020
 3. **TYPE OF APPLICATION:** Appeal of a Zoning Administrator Decision
 4. **LOCATION:** 1490 Fulham St and 2375 Como Ave (parking lot at 1465 Branston Street)
 5. **PINS & LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** 202923130118, St Anthony Park North Vac Alley Adj And Fol; Lots 1 Thru Lot 7 & Lots 11 Thru Lot 16 Blk 11. 202923420126, Mann's Addition To St.,Anthony Ex Como Ave And Ex That Pt Of Lots 1 & 2 Blk 1 That Lies N Of A L Drawn 53.99 Ft S Of And Par With N L Of Sd Lot 1 And E Of A L Drawn 132.98 Ft W Of And Par With E L Of Sd Lot 1 And Ex Pt Of Blks 1 & 2 And Vac Branston St An
 6. **PLANNING DISTRICT:** 12 - St. Anthony Park **PRESENT ZONING:** R3
 7. **ZONING CODE REFERENCE:** §61.701, §61.402(c)
 8. **STAFF REPORT DATE:** January 10, 2020 **BY:** Tia Anderson
 9. **DATE RECEIVED:** December 4, 2019
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- A. **PURPOSE:** Appeal of a zoning administrator decision to approve a site plan (File #19-015-088) for Luther Seminary south campus site improvements including replacement and expansion of an existing surface parking lot at 1465 Branston Street, south of Hendon Ave.
- B. **PARCEL SIZE:** 468,270 sq ft, ~ 10.75 acres
- C. **EXISTING LAND USE:** Seminary
- D. **SURROUNDING LAND USE:**
North: Single-family residential
East: Single-family residential
South: Institutional, Commercial, Multi-family residential
West: Single-family residential
- E. **ZONING CODE CITATION:** § 61.701 specifies standards and procedures for appeal of zoning administrator decisions. § 61.402(c) lists criteria for review and approval of site plans.
- F. **HISTORY/DISCUSSION:**
On March 22, 2019, the Planning Commission passed Resolution 19-11 for a Conditional Use Permit amendment to adjust the Luther Seminary south campus boundary to include lots along the west side of Branston St south of Hendon Ave at 1465-1497 Branston St (PC File #19-014-075). Approval of the adjusted campus boundary was based on an evaluation of criteria including identification of potential parking sites that are generally acceptable in terms of possible access points and anticipated traffic flows on adjacent streets. Demolition of two garages and an existing surface parking lot to be replaced with an expanded parking lot at 1465 Branston St was included in the Planning Commission's review of the Campus Boundary. The Planning Commission also found that Conditional Use standards were met including 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.

On February 22, 2019, a Site Plan Review application (File #19-015-088) was received for the proposed Luther Seminary project including site modifications to the South Campus for sidewalks, off-street parking (1465 Branston St), stormwater management, and landscaping, as well as remodel of the Olson (1490 Fulham St) and Gullixson (2375 Como Ave) buildings. The site plan was reviewed by the Site Plan Review Committee, receiving Conditional Approval on March 22, 2019, and administrative Final Approval on November 26, 2019.

On December 4, 2019, the appellant filed an appeal of the zoning administrator's decision to approve the site plan for Luther Seminary's south campus site improvements specifically the replacement and expansion of the existing surface parking lot at 1465 Branston Street, south of Hendon Ave.

G. DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:

As of January 10, 2020, the Saint Anthony Park Community Council (DC 12) did not provide a recommendation on the appeal. On March 11, 2019, SAPCC sent a letter of support for the updated campus boundary CUP and site plan. SAPCC requested Luther Seminary manage the Branston St parking lot so as to limit traffic to/from the parking lot and slow traffic on Branston St.

H. FINDINGS:

Zoning Code § 61.701 provides that the Planning Commission shall have the power to hear and decide appeals of zoning administrator decisions where it is alleged by the appellant that there is an error in any fact, procedure or finding made by the zoning administrator. In their appeal, the appellant alleges that the site plan is not consistent with Zoning Code § 61.402(c) (7), the site plan review and approval finding regarding "safety and convenience of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic both within the site and in relation to access streets, including traffic circulation features, the locations and design of entrances and exits and parking areas within the site." Specifically, that the expanded Branston Street parking lot should be disapproved due to the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic on Branston Street.

Zoning Code § 61.402(c) says that in "order to approve the site plan, the planning commission shall consider and find that the site plan is consistent with" the eleven findings listed below. The issues raised in the appeal and staff's evaluation of the site plan are addressed in the findings. As the appeal's scope focuses on the Branston Street parking lot and excludes the other Luther Seminary south campus site improvements, such as remodel of the Olson (1490 Fulham St) and Gullixson (2375 Como Ave) buildings, only the Branston Street parking lot is described in the findings.

1. *The city's adopted comprehensive plan and development or project plans for sub-areas of the city.*

The site plan meets this finding, as there is no change to the campus condition or operation resulting from the site improvements.

2. *Applicable ordinances of the City of Saint Paul.*

The site plan meets this finding. The site plan meets the standards, specifically for parking requirements and parking facility standards and design.

- §63.207 – Parking requirements by use: The proposed surface parking lot at 1465 Branston Street includes 19 off-street parking spaces (17 standard and 2 accessible spaces). The amount of off-street parking required per Zoning Code is a minimum of one parking space per every 2 employees and one space per every 3 full-time students not on campus or one space for every 3 part-time students, whichever is greater, plus required parking for other uses. Per Sec. 65.220. - College, university, seminary, or similar institution of higher learning standards and conditions, to determine compliance with parking requirements, the

institution must file an annual report with the planning administrator stating the number of employees, staff and students associated with the institution. With the March 22, 2019, CUP amendment, staff confirmed that there is no change to the parking requirements for the seminary as a result of the boundary adjustment and proposed development plans.

- §63.314. - Landscaping. For any parking facility, landscaping shall be provided to buffer the facility from adjacent properties and from the public right-of-way; reduce the visual glare and heat effects of large expanses of pavement; and provide areas for the retention and absorption of stormwater runoff. Required perimeter landscaping, screening from the right-of-way, and tree plantings are included in the parking lot design.

3. *Preservation of unique geologic, geographic or historically significant characteristics of the city and environmentally sensitive areas.*

The site plan meets this finding. The proposed use is typical of the intent of a R3 single-family residential Zoning District, which allows for civic and institutional uses along with single-family dwellings. 1465 Branston Street is not designated as having historical or environmental significance nor inventoried by Heritage Preservation.

4. *Protection of adjacent and neighboring properties through reasonable provision for such matters as surface water drainage, sound and sight buffers, preservation of views, light and air, and those aspects of design which may have substantial effects on neighboring land uses.*

The site plan meets this finding. The adjoining dwellings to the north and south of the parking lot proposed at 1465 Branston St are part of the Luther Seminary campus. The existing two, three-stall garages and six surface parking spaces will be replaced with a 19 space parking lot. The type of use will remain the same, and Luther Seminary will continue to operate the parking area as an allowed accessory use to the seminary. The parking lot will be buffered by perimeter landscaping and trees with a minimum setback of 12.7' from Branston Street. Stormwater from the site will be managed through permeable surfaces and surface run-off will be captured and piped to an underground infiltration system located under the Branston Street parking lot.

5. *The arrangement of buildings, uses and facilities of the proposed development in order to assure abutting property and/or its occupants will not be unreasonably affected.*

The type of use as accessory off-street parking to the campus will remain the same as it is today. The new, expanded parking lot will be buffered by perimeter landscaping and trees with a minimum setback of 12.7' from Branston Street. All outdoor lighting shall be shielded to reduce glare and shall be so arranged as to reflect lights away from all adjacent residential districts or adjacent residences and not exceed maximum footcandle requirements. Public sidewalks impacted by construction will be replaced on Branston St and internal campus sidewalks and green space will connect the proposed parking lot and public sidewalk to the campus.

6. *Creation of energy-conserving design through landscaping and location, orientation and elevation of structures.*

The site plan meets this finding. The proposed parking lot is located within the approved CUP campus boundary, replacing two, three-stall garages and six surface parking spaces at the site. Required perimeter landscaping, screening from the right-of-way, and tree plantings are proposed, including a minimum 12.7' landscaped area along Branston Street.

7. *Safety and convenience of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic both within the site and in relation to access streets, including traffic circulation features, the locations and design of entrances and exits and parking areas within the site.*

The site plan meets this finding. Branston Street south of Hendon Ave dead-ends just south of the parking lot, and is a one-way loop around Hendon Triangle, which is City of Saint Paul Parks' land. The south Hendon Triangle features a small, public play area with equipment and benches on .23 acres. Branston Street south of Hendon Ave is 33' wide platted right-of-way with one lane of traffic, parking lane, boulevard, and sidewalk on one side.

On residential streets the speed limit is not posted unless it is non-standard. The appellant is requesting big alert and speed signs, though standard residential speed limits apply on Branston Street. The City is evaluating lowering speed limits for all residential streets, with a goal to implement changes by mid-2020. Southbound Branston St is currently signed "dead end," which may be a deterrent for some drivers. Nevertheless, one-way northbound traffic on the east side of Hendon Triangle is facilitated by a turn-around at the end of southbound Branston St or with a wide vehicular turning movement.

On-street parking is unrestricted on southbound Branston St, while one-hour and permit-only parking exists on northbound Branston St. The appellant recommends on-street parking restrictions for the southbound Branston St, which may be pursued by the adjoining property owners through the existing Public Works residential permit parking petition process. Public Works Transportation Planning and Safety staff did not deem restrictions to on-street parking to be warranted as part of the site plan review.

The site plan includes a new, off-street parking lot with 19 parking spaces at 1465 Branston St that replaces two, three-stall garages and an existing 6 space surface parking lot. Based on Traffic Engineering standards and Zoning Ordinance, the size and use of the proposed parking lot did not warrant a traffic memo or study, nor a Travel Demand Management Plan for the campus. The type of use as accessory parking will remain the same, and Luther Seminary will continue to operate the parking area for use by the Seminary's employees, students, and guests. Based on the site plan, Luther Seminary continues to be in compliance with minimum off-street parking requirements and below the parking maximum.

The proposed parking lot adheres to design standards and elements such as parking and driveway dimensions, vehicle maneuvering, a stop sign at the driveway exit, perimeter landscaping, screening from the public right-of-way, and shade tree plantings. Public sidewalks impacted by construction will be replaced on Branston Street. Sidewalks, including driveway crossings, are required to meet ADA standards. Internal campus sidewalks and green space will connect the proposed parking lot and public sidewalk to the campus.

As part of the Site Plan Review, all City staff reviewers signed-off on the site plan as proposed, including department representatives from Parks and Recreation, Department of Safety and Inspections, Public Works Transportation and Safety, and Public Works Street Design and Construction.

8. *The satisfactory availability and capacity of storm and sanitary sewers, including solutions to any drainage problems in the area of the development.*

The site plan meets this finding. The utility connections for Water, Sanitary and Storm sewer services are provided. Stormwater from the site will be managed through permeable surfaces and also piped to underground infiltration systems located under the Branston Street parking lot and a landscaped area in the northwest corner of the site. Drainage maps and HydroCAD modeling to meet the City's stormwater run-off rate control standards were submitted and accepted. The Capitol Region Watershed District has also reviewed the plans and will issue a permit for water quality.

9. *Sufficient landscaping, fences, walls and parking necessary to meet the above objectives.*

The site plan meets this finding. Required perimeter landscaping, screening from the right-of-way, and tree plantings are proposed, including a greater than 12.7' landscaped area along Branston Street. Luther Seminary continues to be in compliance with parking requirements. Bicycle parking will be provided in safe and secure areas convenient to the main entrance of the buildings.

10. *Site accessibility in accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including parking spaces, passenger loading zones and accessible routes.*

The site plan meets this finding. Required ADA parking is distributed across the campus. The plan proposes 2 accessible parking spaces in the Branston Street parking lot. Required accessible entrances and routes shall be provided per accessibility code. The public sidewalks have accessible crossings.

11. *Provision for erosion and sediment control as specified in the ``Ramsey Erosion Sediment and Control Handbook.''*

The site plan meets this finding. The site plan includes an erosion and sediment control plan that is consistent with this standard.

I. **CONCLUSION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Branston Street right-of-way currently allows for one lane of traffic, a parking lane, boulevard, sidewalk on one side, and standard residential speed limits. It is a dead-end street south of Hendon, which limits the amount and speed of traffic at this location. Public Works Transportation Planning and Safety staff did not deem restrictions to on-street parking or other modifications to the use of the right-of-way to be warranted as part of the site plan review.

The proposed off-street parking lot at 1465 Branston St with 19 parking spaces replaces existing garage and surface parking. The type of use as accessory parking will remain the same, and Luther Seminary will continue to operate the parking area for use by the Seminary's employees, students, and guests. Based on the size and use of the proposed parking lot, Traffic Engineering standards did not warrant a traffic memo or study. Luther Seminary is in compliance with off-street parking requirements and the proposed parking lot adheres to parking design and landscape standards.

As part of the Site Plan Review, all City staff reviewers signed-off on the site plan as proposed, including department representatives from Parks and Recreation, Department of Safety and Inspections, Public Works Transportation and Safety, and Public Works Street Design and Construction.

There has not been an error in any fact, procedure or finding made by the zoning administrator pertaining to this case.

Based on the findings above, staff recommends denial of the appeal of the zoning administrator's decision to approve a site plan (File #19-015-088) for Luther Seminary south campus site improvements including replacement and expansion of an existing surface parking lot at 1465 Branston Street, south of Hendon Ave.