




The Alliance

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ADVANCING REGIONAL EQUITY

March 16, 2021

Dear members of the St. Paul City Council,

As a coalition of community-based organizations and advocacy groups in the Twin Cities region dedicated to racial equity and sustainability in growth and development, the Alliance has long worked with city leaders and community based organizations to advance shared goals around equitable development in St. Paul.

In January, in solidarity with member organizations, we sent a letter of opposition to the zoning committee related to the site plan for Lexington Station Apartments, a proposed development at University Avenue and Lexington Parkway. Among our key concerns was that the site plan is not consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

**The Planning Commission rejected the site plan on this basis – and city council must affirm that decision and vote NO on the Alatus appeal.**

As you know, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan is “used by City staff and private developers as a blueprint for future development.” Years in the making, it is also a living testimony that reflects thousands of hours of free labor, attention, and care offered by community members to the City of Saint Paul; residents who shared generations of embodied wisdom to help create the guidelines for what happens in their neighborhoods. Residents who participated in the creation of the Comp Plan not only placed their visions of a future community into the City’s hands, but are trusting them to honor those dreams.

Thanks to that community input, “equity and opportunity” is included as the first core value in the Comp Plan. In every chapter of the plan, from land use to transportation to housing, policies focus on addressing racial and environmental injustice in how we build and grow in St. Paul.

The Planning Commission voted no on the Alatus proposal because it actively increases racial inequities – which is in direct and fundamental conflict with the Comp Plan. Most significantly, Alatus has made no written commitment around affordable housing and has only suggested it would provide units at 60% AMI – a level that FAR exceeds what is actually affordable to area residents and renters most in need of housing. The Planning Commission also cited that the plan violates safe transportation routes outlined in the Lexington Station Area Plan.

We urge you to carefully review the February 26 letter from Alliance member organization, Housing Justice Center, which provides detailed analysis and evidence that provides the legal precedent and housing imperative to reject the appeal.

Many leaders from the City of St. Paul have consistently stated their commitment to racial equity and affordable housing. But, in the overwhelming number of projects that occur on private land without public subsidy, city staff and department leaders have been unable to advance the clearly articulated goals of directly impacted community members and organizations. While they may not have the technical expertise to navigate complicated institutions like the planning department to ensure they are implemented, Saint Paul residents have made their priorities clear. This development is a critical opportunity for city leaders to be accountable to the voices that are consistently excluded from these decisions – just as the Planning Commission did by listening to public comment and citing the Comp Plan as a legal reason for denial.

**By voting NO on the Alatus appeal and affirming a meaningful interpretation of equity in the Comprehensive Plan,** the city council can – and must – take a step toward authentic and accountable community engagement and true equitable development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JHP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joo Hee Pomplun  
Executive Director