

**From:** [Barbara Brown](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 4:33:24 PM

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I **STRONGLY** oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

I am a Summit Hill resident homeowner with a condo on St. Albans. This project is too big and too tall; it is out of character. It will damage the neighborhood. Ask the developers to follow existing zoning codes.

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

The neighborhood is overwhelmingly against this proposal!

Barbara Brown

651-239-2879

42 St. Albans Street South #3

St. Paul MN 55105

**From:** [bethany.gladhill](mailto:bethany.gladhill@cityofstpaul.com)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](mailto:CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@cityofstpaul.com)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 3:05:56 PM

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City of Saint Paul:

I'm writing today in opposition to the 695 Grand Ave (ZF#21-269-061) CUP and variance requests.

Though this is not my main point, I could be in opposition because, thought Saint Paul might need more affordable housing units for families, there is no evidence that it needs more market-rate units, particularly given the large number of vacant units still available in nearby properties such as "The Grove," "The Harper," and the soon to open "Pivot," "Liffey," and other properties. While affordable (under \$300,000) homes are being torn down weekly in the city to be replaced with larger, far more expensive homes (ironically also needing variances), these new construction apartments struggle for occupancy, with vacancy rates at or near 50% (even given the fact that in several of the aforementioned properties, it appears that a number of the units have been converted to short-term rental units). Since developers admit at community meetings that these are, at best, "medium term" investments slated to be sold to a REIT within 5-7 years, this is perhaps not surprising.

Nor am I necessarily writing due to my skepticism that the developer will be renting to "retirees and empty-nesters from the neighborhood" as indicated in community meetings, since we know that it is impractical if not illegal to restrict in that manner.

Nor am I even writing, as past president of SARPA, to indicate my concern about the issues a building of this scale would place on the adjacent (across the alley) historic district, especially since it appears that, at the recent commission meeting, the planner indicated there was "no room on the staff report" for these issues.

No, my main point is about variances themselves. It is a long-held tenet of planning that variances, which allow the applicant to depart from standard planning rules, were devised to alleviate "unnecessary hardship." Often these were established to address a site that, after zoning code had been established, were rendered unbuildable due to the code (for example a strangely shaped or sized lot due to lot splits). In a city like Saint Paul, in which all lots are generally buildable in some way — and particularly on an already built lot — variances should thus be rare and unusual.

A commonly held misconception in relation to this is that financial hardship justifies a variance. As succinctly stated in *The Practice of Local Government Planning* (So, Getzels, et al, 1988) "the variance is supposed to alleviate a hardship that is inherent in a piece of land, not a hardship created by the owner's error in paying too much for the parcel."

In this particular case, the developer has admitted in several community meetings that the size and scale of the building could be reduced, but that he is unwilling to do so because he needs to maximize the number of units and the project's profit.

There is no reason that this developer should be granted several variances that could be construed to create adverse effects (including but not limited to loss of light and air on adjacent properties, complicated parking issues) on nearby households, thereby potentially decreasing the value of established properties, simply to allow him greater profit from the development. This is antithetical to the concept of city planning as a whole, and I call on the city to uphold these principles. As called upon by the majority of neighbors, a (slightly) smaller scale, mixed-use development would easily address these concerns, need no variances, and still allow the developer a reasonable profit.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Gladhill

627 Ashland Avenue, Saint Paul

Bethany Gladhill  
she/her/hers

Arts and Non-Profit Management Consultant

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blog - <http://prologuist.blogspot.com>

twitter - @bethanyg

**From:** [Betsy Turner](#)  
**To:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [\\*CI-StPaul PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [\\*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to the 695 development project  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 2:18:43 PM

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I am extremely opposed to the ZF#21-269-061 695 GrandCup & variances application.  
I'm Betsy Turner at 51 S. Avon St. ( exactly 2 blocks away from 695 Grand), and I have lived on the SW corner of Grand & Avon for 31 years.

As I have frequently expressed, the proposed 5 story building would do irreparable damage to the nature of this historic neighborhood. Please follow the existing zoning codes and the East Grand Ave.Overlay. Exceptions should not be made for a business that is not considering the long term consequences to our existing area. Allowing this building to be built would start a domino effect, and before you know it, the charm of this place would be gone forever, and all for what-- so that a business can get its way over the rules that were established to prevent exactly this kind of development ? Don't the vast majority of the residents' wishes count for anything ?

Please consider precedent and don't overrule the existing zoning codes and the East Grand Ave. Overlay.... they were implemented for good reason and need to be respected and adhered to !!

Thanks for your consideration on this very vital matter,  
Betsy Turner

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:28:33 AM

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**From:** Chan Poling <chanpol@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 6:55 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

We are homeowners in the Grand Avenue neighborhood and want our voices to be heard.

We would happily support a plan that follows existing zoning codes but, as it stands, we strongly oppose the 695 grand CUP and variances application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

Thanks for counting our votes in your decision.

**Chan Poling & Patty Radford Henderson**  
**613 Goodrich Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:36:44 AM

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**From:** Charlotte Johnson <shotsyj23@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 11, 2021 8:46 AM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Having been a resident of the Grand/Summit Hill area for more than 50 years, I have witnessed much change on Grand Ave, most of which I would call "positive progress." The current plans for 695 Grand Avenue is not positive. The alternative plans submitted by those most impacted by the redevelopment is excellent and would be a true attraction to the area for both residents and visitors. With these plans there would be no need for exceptions to the current zoning rules. No exception should be made for this project at 695 Grand Avenue.

**Charlotte Johnson**  
[shotsyj23@gmail.com](mailto:shotsyj23@gmail.com)

**From:** [Christopher Tyndall](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul>Contact-Council](#)  
**Cc:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 10:22:22 AM

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I am writing to express my strong opposition to the current proposal for development at 695 Grand Avenue (ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances). I am a resident of St Paul living in the Como Park area. however, I am a frequent visitor to Grand Avenue and a longtime patron of many of the businesses in this area.

I should emphasize that I am a strong proponent of increasing areas of high-density living within the city limits. The purpose of high-density housing should be to mitigate the high-energy and natural-resource demands of our current sprawling lifestyle. High-density housing must be an important component in a general plan whose overall purpose is to provide residents of a particular neighborhood with all of the resources they need to live their lives, as much as possible, closer to home. In other words, we need to promote and encourage, not just "high-density housing," but a true "high-density lifestyle."

Whether 1 family or 100 families live at 695 Grand Avenue, the neighborhood resources remain the same. Let us consider as an example of my point just the question of transportation. Because viable transit options have not been provided and because other necessary resources are not available close by, the vast majority of residents at this location will still need to use cars to get to work, to appointments and for making other necessary trips to locations outside of the neighborhood. This disproportionate number of cars in such a small area will only increase traffic congestion and air pollution and greatly compromise safety for the many pedestrians who walk there. We also need to consider that the high number of residents will attract a constant flow of delivery trucks and vehicles. Just as they have always done, the vast majority of patrons to the three restaurants will drive in from outside the neighborhood. These restaurants will also require a steady flow of delivery and maintenance vehicles, while restaurant employees will drive to and from the location throughout the long work day that will extend late into the evening.

This building project is simply too big for an area that is already over-burdened by high traffic and has limited potential for the development of transit. It does nothing to encourage the use of transportation alternatives. It is not part of any sort of coordinated development plan for the area at all. Please respect the current zoning rules for this area of Grand Avenue. Please vote to deny a variance for this project in its current form.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my views on this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Christopher R. Tyndall  
1247 Osage Street  
St Paul 55117

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Reference to: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:37:43 AM

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**From:** danecohen@comcast.net <danecohen@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 10, 2021 8:56 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** Reference to: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hi Sonia,

We live at 824 Lincoln Ave and oppose the proposed development. We welcome development that complies with existing rules.

Approving this proposal will encourage a flood of developers who will exploit and devalue homes in the area.

Please consider the negative impact this will have on the community.

Thanks

Dan Cohen  
612-209-1571  
Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 695 Grand Development  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:36:24 AM

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**From:** Elizabeth Grundhoefer <[elizabeth.grundhoefer@teamexos.com](mailto:elizabeth.grundhoefer@teamexos.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 11, 2021 7:17 AM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <[sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** 695 Grand Development

**Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.**

Planning Commission,

In regard to a new structure to replace 695 Grand/Dixie, I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules and believe a new structure would benefit the Grand Avenue businesses. I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning as proposed at this time. I believe an alternative structure that is in size and nature with the neighborhood would better serve the Grand Avenue neighborhood and businesses.

Thank you,

--

Elizabeth Grundhoefer  
651-249-5256

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**From:** [Feichten](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** 695 Grand Avenue CUP and variances ZF# 21-269-061  
**Date:** Friday, July 9, 2021 4:30:21 PM

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695 Grand Avenue  
ZF #21-269-061

Zoning Committee Members,

I have been a resident of Summit Hill for nearly 50 years. I have observed new buildings go up and some taken down. Some of the building projects on Grand Avenue have added to the historic charm and friendly culture of the District. Unfortunately, some building projects have been built to the detriment of the neighborhood, ignoring the character of the area and needs of residents and other business owners. I believe that the proposed project at 695 Grand falls into the latter category as it would cause significant damage to this area of Summit Hill.

The East Grand Avenue Overlay has created clear expectations for future building projects and I, along with the majority of surveyed residents, support these expectations. I do not believe conditional use permits and exemptions or variances should be granted to building projects that are not designed to comply with the East Grand Avenue Overlay.

The proposed development at 695 Grand is far too massive a structure for such a small, already busy site and will negatively affect the entire District. Living a mile away, I still walk and shop in that area daily. Traffic and parking are already problematic on the streets surrounding 695 Grand. The project will only greatly exacerbate those problems. Can you imagine the number of delivery trucks throughout the day to service the proposed restaurants and the residents of 79 new units?! Where are the guests of 79 residential units to park? As a pedestrian, I see that increasing population density to the unreasonable degree proposed by the developers will affect my safety. And as a shopper, I will avoid the businesses in that building and near that area as parking will become impossible.

Taller buildings physically distance people from the neighborhoods they live in. People disengage from a sense of community in taller buildings and that has been shown to affect crime rates. We can ill afford to build projects that may contribute to a growing crime problem in St. Paul.

I support new businesses on Grand Avenue and the addition of reasonable housing density but this project does not offer reasonableness or a genuine contribution to the neighborhood. Rather the massive scale of the proposed building seems to be motivated by owner profit. I am hoping you can see that the project will destroy the appeal of East Grand Avenue with a lasting negative economic impact for business owners and residents and, ultimately, the City.

A scaled down version of the project, compliant with the East Grand Avenue Overlay would be a welcome addition to the site. Increased density could be achieved with a much shorter building that houses fewer units. A more reasonable number of residents could be safely accommodated within the current surrounding infrastructure.

I strongly oppose the CUP and variances for 695 Grand Avenue. I am confident the developers can adjust the project so it contributes to, rather than detracts from, the character and well-being of Summit Hill.

Please vote No for the 695 Grand CUP and variances.

Thank you for considering my opinion,  
Ellen Eichten

1067 Linwood Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Elysia Gallo](#)  
**To:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [\\*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#); [\\*CI-StPaul PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment on ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 3:42:42 PM

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Dear Decision Makers of Saint Paul,

I oppose the 695 Grand Development project. I live nearby on Osceola Avenue (where I have been renting for 16 years) and frequently walk all up and down Grand Avenue to shop and eat at my favorite restaurants, from Shish to Tavern on Grand and many places in between.

What we love about our neighborhood is its historic charm. It feels like the heart of Saint Paul, not just for its business district, but for the grandeur of the brownstones and Victorian mansions that extend far beyond just Summit Avenue. The history of Saint Paul and the state of Minnesota was woven among its streets and is palpable here. It is walkable, pleasant, and charming.

We do NOT want Grand Avenue to become a copycat of University or Snelling. We do not want to see a building take up more space than it is allowed by existing zoning codes and the East Grand Avenue Overlay. We want more mixed-use housing (specifically: affordable housing that is in sync with the neighborhood) but the design as proposed is too big and too tall.

If you grant a variance to this project, many more will follow, until the look and feel of our neighborhood is eroded. It is important to not make exceptions as this will create a dangerous precedent.

Please preserve historic Summit Hill by insisting that the developer work within the carefully thought-out and planned bounds. Ask the developers to follow existing zoning codes and the Overlay.

The neighborhood is overwhelmingly opposed – do you represent and work for us, or do you represent and work for rich developers? We will know your stance soon enough; please don't disappoint us.

Thank you,

Elysia Gallo

1022 Osceola Ave.

Apt. 7

Saint Paul, MN 55105

651-795-8344





EHANSEN@BURNSHANSEN.COM  
Direct Dial: 952-564-6252

VIA E-MAIL

July 8, 2021

St. Paul Zoning Committee  
PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us.  
25 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1400  
St. Paul, MN 55102

*Re: 695 Grand CUP with Variances  
ZF# 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP & Variance*

Zoning Committee:

I write on behalf of concerned residents of the area surrounding the proposed 695 Grand Avenue New Mixed-Use Development (the "Project"). Recently, the Zoning Committee addressed the Project's request to rezone from B2 (Community Business) to T3 (Traditional Neighborhood) without the East Grand Avenue Overlay. As you know, the Zoning Committee followed the staff recommendation and voted to recommend rezoning B2 to T3, but denied the rezoning out of the EG Overlay.<sup>1</sup> Because the Project is still subject to the EG Overlay, the Project now requests numerous variances for the front setback, building footprint, building height, and a conditional use permit for a 59' 10" building height. It bears repeating that the rezoning, conditional use permit, and multiple variances are all tactics after the same goal: circumventing the established building size, height and area limitations that are codified in St. Paul ordinance, all for the financial benefit of one owner and to the detriment of adjacent property owners' and the reasonable enjoyment of their property. My client's respectfully object to the Project's requests.

It should be noted, my clients support mixed-use development at 695 Grand Avenue. My clients do not, however, support a colossal structure of the scale and intensity of use proposed. The demand for variances and conditional use permit is driven solely by economic considerations, which is an insufficient basis for the Project's requests. A 3-story mixed-use project could be built by right, without any variances or a conditional use permit. Such a project would be a reasonable use consistent with current building regulations, the relevant comprehensive plans, and

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<sup>1</sup> The full St. Paul Planning Commission will vote on the recommended rezoning on July 9<sup>th</sup> and the rezoning must still be approved by the St. Paul City Council. My clients continue their objection to rezoning B2 to T3.

would ameliorate the negative impacts of increased density in the area. Accordingly, my clients respectfully request you deny the conditional use permit and variances.

## I. VARIANCE

The Project has requested several major variances: (1) a variance of 8 feet for front setback from Grand Avenue, (2) a variance of 5,500 SF of building footprint, (2) a variance of 49,000 SF total building size above grade, and a 23'-10" variance for building height. These are extremely large variance requests. Further, it is our reading of the St. Paul zoning code that additional variances should be required for this application.<sup>2</sup>

The Project's massing, land coverage, and height would dominate the location and surrounding neighborhood. Indeed, the Project's aberrant design relative to the area is reflected by its noncompliance with the express standards and regulations of the EG Overlay. The variances requested are not consistent with the comprehensive plans and are only requested due to economic considerations. Because the Project does not meet the criteria to be granted the variances, its requests should be denied.

### 1. The variance request is not in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.

The East Grand Avenue Overlay District ("EG Overlay") was established "to provide design standards and building height, size, and footprint limits, and to reduce the shortage of parking in the east Grand Avenue area." Sec. 67.601. Concerns related to significant deviations from the historic character of East Grand Avenue are precisely why the EG Overlay was created. The EG Overlay was implemented following developers' exploitation of zoning loopholes and disregard for East Grand Avenue's existing character. Therefore, within the EG Overlay, building regulations limit the maximum building footprints to 25,000 square feet and a total above ground building size of 75,000 square feet. Building heights are limited to a maximum of three stories and 36 feet for commercial-residential mixed-use buildings.<sup>3</sup> Further, "T2" Traditional Neighborhood Design standards are required.

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<sup>2</sup> The City previously received a letter identifying additional variance(s) that should be applied, including off-street loading requirements (63.400), as well as from the dimensional standards stipulating height and setback requirements for Table 66.331(e) along the alley and St Albans. Further, the proposal does not meet required Traditional Neighborhood design standards (66.343); these must be met "unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are circumstances unique to the property that make compliance impractical or unreasonable." (66.343). The most egregious departures from these required standards are from Design Standards 2 and 3, which require "careful attention to building height, scale, massing and solar exposure" as well as, on corner lots such as this, matching the establish building line. The U-shaped design with design with a northern "bottom" of the U located just 8 feet from the property line is particularly noteworthy as it does not evince "careful attention" to solar exposure.

<sup>3</sup> Under the EG Overlay, the Project must also "be consistent with the applicable design standards unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are circumstances unique to the property that make compliance impractical or unreasonable." Sec. 66.343(a). Significantly, "[t]ransitions in density or intensity shall be managed through careful attention to building height, scale, massing and solar exposure." Sec. 66.343(b)(2).

The Project proposes a structure which includes a main floor footprint of 30,210 square feet and is approximately 60 feet tall. The proposed project is a combined 153,854 square feet, with 123,353 square feet above grade. The footprint of the Project covers approximately 85% of the existing lot with impervious surfaces. The Project would reign over the surrounding area and would not comply with “T2” Traditional Neighborhood Design standards. The preexisting structures adjacent to the Project are 20 to approximately 45 feet shorter. The Project has a building size 1.64 times larger and 1.66 times taller than what is allowed within the EG Overlay. In essence, the Project proposes a full project and 2/3rds at a single location.

The Project is surrounded by residential properties, which are shorter, less dense, and consistent with the uniquely historic character of the area. Mixed-use development could be constructed in the area under the existing building and design regulations, which would match the context and character of the area. However, the Project as currently designed is incongruous with the area. The Project’s height, mass, and density is orders of magnitude larger than surrounding apartment and condominium buildings and would be a deviation from the general purposes and intent of the zoning code. The abrupt change from shorter residential properties to the Property cannot avoid disrupting the area’s overall pattern of architectural harmony and continuity.

Moreover, the variance request for additional height, mass, and footprint to facilitate an increase in density will negatively impact the parking shortage in the area. Individuals who can afford to live in the Project’s luxury apartments will likely have personal vehicles. Residents, their guests, and patrons of the Project’s business tenants will be forced to compete for a finite and ever decreasing amount of parking. An increase in the number of personal vehicles will exacerbate preexisting traffic and parking congestion and strain road and public service infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Bikers along the existing bikeways will be forced to navigate around additional traffic and parked cars. Pedestrians on St. Albans will be endangered by the blind exit located just three feet from a heavily used residential sidewalk.

## **2. The variances are not consistent with the comprehensive plan.**

The City of St. Paul’s Comprehensive Plan (“2040 Comp Plan”) and the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan (“Summit Hill Plan”) are the guiding comprehensive plans for the Project and the surrounding area. Although the Project touts its consistency with the 2040 Comp Plan, it could promote those same policies without variances to increase its height, building footprint, or building area. Nothing precludes the Project from using the property for a mixed-use development without

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<sup>4</sup> The Project’s Trip Generation Study optimistically expects that only 25% of residents will exit during peak morning hours.



additional variances. Moreover, the variances requested would fail to promote other policies of the guiding comprehensive plans.

The variance requests are inconsistent with the following comprehensive plan goals and policies:

### 2040 Comp Plan

LU-1. Contrary to 2040 Comp Plan Policy LU-1, the increased density of the Project is not focused in an area with high existing or planned transit capacity.<sup>5</sup> Grand Avenue is serviced by a single bus route, Route 63.<sup>6</sup> Due to the lack of high existing transit capacity, parking and traffic congestion will increase. As discussed above, this will negatively impact Grand Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood.

LU-29. The 2040 Comp Plan Policy LU-29 directs zoning action to ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition to those permitted in adjoining districts. The Project would tower over the surrounding residential neighborhood. The massing effect due to its significant variances from applicable design and building regulations would stick out and disrupt the transition from Grand Avenue into the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Housing Goal 3. This goal of the 2040 Comp Plan is to “[p]rovide fair and equitable access to housing for all city residents.” Additional above market-rate luxury apartments will worsen preexisting housing inequalities in St. Paul and further stratify existing housing.

H-16. The 2040 Comp plan aims to “increase housing choice across the city to support economically diverse neighborhoods by pursuing policies and practices that maximize housing and locational choices for residents of all income levels.” The Project fails to promote this policy and provide the type of housing the area desperately needs.

Rental rates in the Summit Hill neighborhood average approximately \$920.00 per month.<sup>7</sup> Monthly rental rates for the Project will range from \$1,400.00 for an alcove to \$2,750 for a two-bedroom apartment. Parking will be an additional \$175.00 per month. Additional market-rate rental properties do not address the real need and demand for affordable housing. Moreover, the scale of this project increases the rents: a 5-story building has higher per-square-foot costs than a code-compliant 3-story

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<sup>5</sup> Metro Transit has 14 routes defined as “High Frequency”—routes with no more than 15 minutes between trips; five of these service St Paul: Greenline LRT, A Line BRT, Route 54 on W 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Route 64 along Maryland Avenue, and Route 21 that connects Selby Avenue to Lake Street in Minneapolis.

<sup>6</sup> Route 63 generally has a frequency of 20 minutes or more most days. During rush hour, the frequency is approximately 10-20 minutes. Stated another way, 77% of the time Route 63 has a frequency of 20 minutes or more.

<sup>7</sup> Gabriela Norton & Carolyn Szczepanski, MARKET WATCH: Saint Paul, Minnesota Housing Project, July 2018, *available at* <https://www.mhponline.org/publications/rental-market-watch/issue-2-saint-paul>.

building would. A 5-story project development can cost as much a 200% more to build per square foot and the increased costs will be passed to the development's residential and business tenants.<sup>8</sup>

Continued construction of large developments of above market-rate rentals jeopardize lower-density apartment buildings that exist along Grand Avenue and elsewhere in the neighborhood; buildings which support and enhance the historical character and charm of the neighborhood, and qualify as naturally-occurring affordable housing. The Project risks placing upward pressure on rent within the area and displacing less economically secure residents.<sup>9</sup> More affordable housing near new construction are likely to have rents higher compared to similar housing.<sup>10</sup> Even worse, allowing luxury housing to exceed design standards and building regulations will create enormous incentives toward the demolition of existing smaller multifamily housing, like the quintessential brick two-story apartment that provides much the affordable housing on and around Grand Avenue. The result is an economically exclusionary area that diminishes the diversity and vibrancy of the community.

H-45. This policy supports the preservation and maintenance of historic housing stock as an affordable housing option. Granting the Project's variance requests will create a race to demolish existing naturally-occurring affordable housing. Developers will seek variances to construct massive and dense luxury housing. Historic housing stock will be diminished and many community members will be priced out.

HP-16. This policy directs that a balance must be struck between preserving the historic neighborhood and new development by considering the impact of the Project on the character-defining features of the area and the area context. Grand Avenue and the surrounding area is a vibrant and dynamic community with a rich architectural history. Indeed, the location of the Project is within State and Federal Historic Districts. The imposition of a significantly taller and massive structure does not provide a transition to building designs in the adjoining areas and is out of context with the character-defining features of the area.

### Summit Hill Plan

H9. The Summit Hill Plan expresses a goal of ensuring "that new and renovated mixed-use buildings on Grand Avenue respect the historic nature and character of

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<sup>8</sup> Andres Torrubia, et al. FIXR: Jan 20, 2021, available at <https://www.fixr.com/costs/build-apartment#apartment-construction-costs-per-unit>.

<sup>9</sup> Atticus Jaramillo & Chip Halbach, *Sold Out*, Minnesota Housing Project, October 2016, available at [https://www.mhponline.org/images/Sold\\_Out\\_final\\_revised\\_small.pdf](https://www.mhponline.org/images/Sold_Out_final_revised_small.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Damiano & Chris Frenier, *Build Baby Build?: Housing Submarkets and the Effects of New Construction on Existing Rents* (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Working Paper 2020) available at <https://www.cura.umn.edu/research/research/build-baby-build-housing-submarkets-and-effects-new-construction-existing-rents>.

the neighborhood...” The mass, bulk, and height of the Project is out of character for the neighborhood and does not respect its historic nature.

H12. The Summit Hill Plan promotes the retention of rental housing options and affordability. The Project will decrease the affordability of housing in the area and lead to the loss of naturally-occurring affordable housing.

G6. “[V]ariances are opposed by SHA in those areas where parking and traffic problems create undue hardship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors.” This area has intense use of on-street parking by current land uses. As discussed previously, the variances function to maximize the density of luxury apartments. Granting additional variances to increase density for this location will create additional undue hardship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors.

3. The applicant has not established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision.

The Project asserts that the practical difficulties in complying with the EG Overlay are due to its restrictive height and density limits. This is insufficient to find a practical difficulty. Any variance request is not a result of the unique topography of the area or the Project’s location relative to other constraining features. Rather, the developer has made a choice<sup>11</sup> – a choice driven solely by economic considerations – to build a massive structure within the EG Overlay with minimal setbacks and an outdoor patio area.

The true purpose of the Project’s variance requests is to improve the economic feasibility of the development. It cannot reasonably be disputed the feasibility of the Project is directly tied to building as many luxury apartments as possible. The Project acknowledged as much during the July 1 zoning meeting. Nothing prevents the Project from building mixed-use development without the need for extensive variances. Such a development would be a reasonable use of the property. The only conclusion to be drawn is that the variances are requested solely to maximize returns on investment. Economic considerations do not constitute practical difficulties. The Project cannot establish there are practical difficulties other than their own economic considerations. Variances for the practical purpose of maximizing the number of luxury apartments does not satisfy this criteria.

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<sup>11</sup> The Developer has also made many other choices to ensure that the Project is luxury-priced rental housing, and these discretionary choices have increased the per-square foot costs. For example: ceiling heights in excess of 9 feet for the housing and in excess of 15 feet for the retail; amenities like club rooms and work out spaces; structured parking for retail spaces instead of surface parking in the rear.

4. **The plight of the landowner is not due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.**

The plight – the need for variances for the Project as currently designed – is not due to circumstances unique to the property. Again, the Project could be designed to comply with design and building regulations required by the EG Overlay. The EG Overlay was established based upon stakeholders carefully considering the needs of the community. It is not that a mixed-use development cannot be built at the location. Rather, the Project is unwilling to be designed consistent with the EG Overlay. Any plight of the landowner is self-imposed and not a basis to grant the variances requested.

5. **The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.**

The variances will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.

6. **The variance will alter the essential character of the surrounding area.**

The essence of the surrounding area is a vibrant community of historic, mixed income housing and local businesses. Mixed-use development could be constructed at this location without altering the essential character of the area. However, instead of incorporating itself into the community, the Project proposes a hulking structure that would impose itself on the community and change its essential character. At 20 feet to 45 feet taller than any building in the adjacent area, the Project would loom over the neighborhood and its mass would jut out of the surrounding area. Its design would be an aberration from the historic nature of the community. The variances, which would result in significantly increased density and intensity of use, would negatively impact the livability of the neighborhood. Rental prices would increase. Parking and traffic congestion would worsen. Public infrastructure and services would be overburdened. The fabric of the community would begin to fray under the mass of the Project. Undoubtedly, the Project would be noteworthy for its alteration to the area. Not only for its height, bulk, and footprint, but also how it portends the destruction of the surrounding area's essential character. Accordingly, the Project's variance requests should be denied.

## II. **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

In addition to the variances, the Project requests a Conditional Use Permit ("CUP") to allow for a 59'-10" building height. St. Paul Ordinance articulates the required findings for approval of a conditional use as follows:

- (a) The extent, location and intensity of the use will be in substantial compliance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council.
- (b) The use will provide adequate ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.
- (c) 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.
- (d) The use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.
- (e) The use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

Sec. 61.501

Many of the reasons the Project's variance requests should be denied can be applied to denial of its request for a CUP. The zoning committee should consider the effects of the increased density and intensity of use when evaluating the Project's request for a CUP. In summary, the Project's height, which is proposed solely to maximize the number of luxury apartments at the location, is not in compliance with the applicable comprehensive plans. The Project is not located near high existing transit capacity, does not transition to nor consider the historic character of the surrounding area, and does not promote the retention of naturally-occurring affordable housing.

The increase in height permitted under a CUP will also endanger the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community. Additional height beyond what is allowed under the EG Overlay would cast maximum shadows on surrounding residential properties. Neighbors will have less privacy due to the residents and guests of the new mixed-use development living high above them. Pedestrians and bikers will be endangered by increased traffic and parked cars caused by the intensification of use for the location. Existing sewer, water, parking, road, and public service infrastructure will also be strained. The area will experience an overall reduction in the health, safety, and welfare of its residents.

The Project will also impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district. It is clear, based upon the EG Overlay, which limits the size of mixed-use development, that normal and orderly development included limitations on the size and height of

buildings. The construction of a large building will impede the development because it will be an outlier in a historic area of smaller residential and commercial properties. This would lead to a race to rezone the area and construct equally large residential and mixed-use developments thereby destroying the orderly development of Grand Avenue as an area of smaller buildings built within the context of its historic character.

A conditional use permit for the purpose of maximizing the number of luxury apartments does not meet the required criteria. Because the Project cannot establish the required findings, its Conditional Use Permit should also be denied.

### III. CONCLUSION

The variances and Condition Use Permit requested should be denied because the requests do not satisfy the required criteria and are driven by the Project's profit margins. The Project obscures its primary focus on economic considerations behind the laudable policies of the area's comprehensive plans and the purportedly restrictive requirements of the EG Overlay. The EG Overlay was established to maintain the neighborhood's uniquely historic character and vibrant community. A three-story mixed-use development could be developed at this location and could conform to existing design and building regulations. Moreover, a smaller structure would provide more housing in a neglected segment of the housing market while providing a smooth transition to the surrounding residential neighborhood. The Project's requests for variances and a CUP, however, disregard these facts in pursuit of maximizing the Project's profits. Because the Project has failed to establish a basis for variances or a Conditional Use Permit, their requests should be denied.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik F. Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Erik F. Hansen  
Attorney at Law

EFH/DRR/md

cc: Client

**From:** [grtodd@comcast.net](mailto:grtodd@comcast.net)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** Petition Opposing the 695 Grand Avenue Proposal - Mapping of addresses of signers  
**Date:** Thursday, July 8, 2021 10:04:21 AM  
**Attachments:** [Map of Petition Signer Addresses - Ward 2.pdf](#)

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From: Gary R. Todd  
682 Summit Ave  
St. Paul, MN 55105

Zoning File Numbers #21-271-810  
#21-269-061  
Property Address of the Zoning Case 692 Grand Avenue St. Paul, MN  
55105

All,  
A petition opposing the 695 Grand Avenue Development proposal was presented as part of the public comment at the July 1<sup>st</sup> Zoning Committee meeting. During this meeting, a comment was made implying that the petition signers were all from a two-block radius. Attached is a map that shows where the bulk of the people who signed the petition opposing the 695 Grand Avenue proposal live. This map clearly displays that the opposition to the proposal is coming from across the city, especially in Ward 2 and Ward 3 spreading across the Summit-University (District 8), Summit Hill (District 16) and Union Park (District 13) Neighborhood Districts. Visitors to the area from Minneapolis, White Bear Lake and other surrounding communities were also represented.

The numbers, as reported on July 1<sup>st</sup>, were:

401 – opposed      185 – residents      153 – visitors/shoppers      63 –  
business owners/employees

Thank you.  
GRT

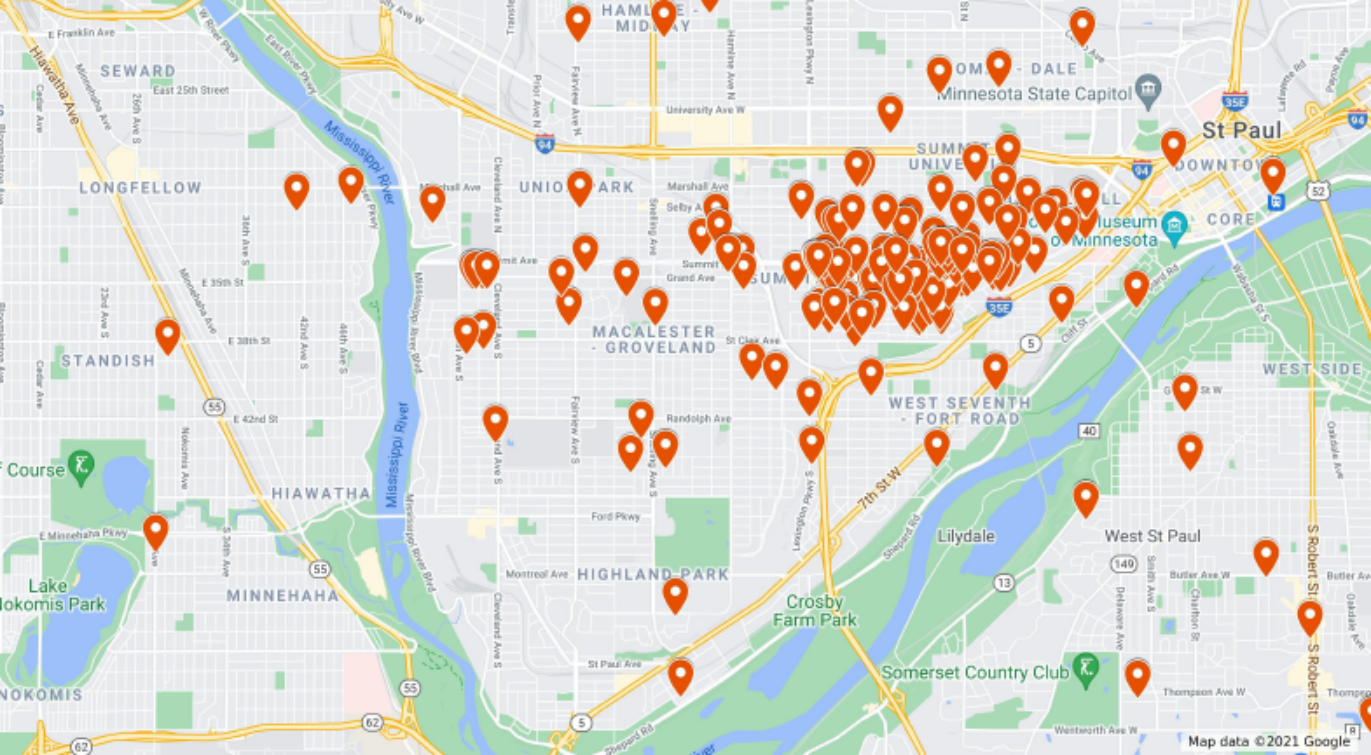
Gary R. Todd  
682 Summit Avenue

“The best music forgets that it’s being sung.  
It comes naturally.”

St. Paul, MN 55105  
[grtodd@comcast.net](mailto:grtodd@comcast.net)  
651-470-4720 – cell

**Apeirogon** by Colum McCann





## Siegworth, Emma (CI-StPaul)

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**From:** J Baxter <mrjackbaxter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 8, 2021 10:02 PM  
**To:** Siegworth, Emma (CI-StPaul)  
**Subject:** Re: 695 Grand; opposition & Mis-sorted opposition

**Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.**

Esteemed Ms. Siegworth,

Thank you kindly for your personal reply and for the correction to the record.

Please include my letter as public comment against the 695 Grand/Dixies project for the upcoming hearing, on 7/15. I was very impressed with the insight and the passion for the neighborhood of those opposed. I agree that this project will do lasting harm. I do experience Grand Avenue as my neighborhood, though I am across the invisible and arbitrary border line that runs down the center of Summit Avenue. I am a Summit-U resident.

Respectfully,

J. Baxter

On Jul 7, 2021, at 1:47 PM, Siegworth, Emma (CI-StPaul) <Emma.Siegworth@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Hello Mr. Baxter,

Thank you for calling this to our attention. We will get that letter filed in the right folder.

Thanks,

**Emma Siegworth**

/ Planner

nouns: she/her

Department of Planning and Economic Development

100 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street

St. Paul, MN 55102

Phone: 651-266-6657

[emma.siegworth@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:emma.siegworth@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

[www.ci.stpaul.mn.us](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us)

<image003.png>

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**From:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 6, 2021 8:07 AM

**To:** Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul) <samantha.langer@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Siegworth, Emma (CI-StPaul) <Emma.Siegworth@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

**Subject:** FW: 695 Grand; opposition & Mis-sorted opposition

**Importance:** High

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**From:** J Baxter <[mrjackbaxter@gmail.com](mailto:mrjackbaxter@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, July 05, 2021 8:02 PM

**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <[sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Cc:** [gingerhheifer1910@gmail.com](mailto:gingerhheifer1910@gmail.com)

**Subject:** 695 Grand; opposition & Mis-sorted opposition

**Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.**

Esteemed Ms. Butler:

I was reading through the letters regarding 695 Grand /Dixie's and the hearing July 1st. I noticed a mistake and thought it imperative to bring it to your attention for correction.

I am CCing the author of the email so she or he can weigh in, as well.

The following letter (see photo) was erroneously placed in the rezoning "support" folder.

It clearly states support for a mixed use development **that complies with the current zoning**

Support for the **current zoning is NOT support of a rezoning**, or of this project.

<image001.jpg>

After reading all the commentary, I also OPPOSE the rezoning, variances, and CUP on this oversized project.

Grand is an important economic engine for St. Paul and the scale of this proposal would damage it, while causing displacement and a reduction of affordable housing options.

J. Baxter

Summit-University

**From:** [Jean Gendron](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 10:01:22 PM

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I live at 676 Summit Avenue, one block from the proposed development at Grand and St. Alban's, and would like to express my opposition to the development. The planned building is much too massive for the location, and would create significant traffic and parking problems in the neighborhood. It would violate both the current zoning and the height requirements of the East Grand Avenue Overlay; what is the point of having these ordinances if they can be overridden at a developer's request? I would welcome a mixed-use development at this location, but not this one.

Jean Gendron  
676 Summit Avenue  
gendron\_j@msn.com

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Please Oppose ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:34:43 AM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)  
[image007.png](#)

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**From:** Jeff Grady <jjgrady@mmm.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 7:23 AM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** Please Oppose ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Dear St. Paul Planning Commission,

I live and own the home at 674 Lincoln Ave. We purchased our home in 2001 and have had the pleasure and honor of living in this wonderful neighborhood.

I am writing to ask you to **REJECT** the proposed zoning variances for 695 Grand Ave.

1. The proposed building is not compliant with the East Grand Overlay Plan at five stories. The five story proposal does not fit the character of the neighborhood and is too dense. It is too tall and massive as proposed.
2. Renter and Employee parking concerns, building shadows, traffic and safety concerns all impact the neighborhood and have not adequately been addressed by the developer.
3. I am not opposed to mixed use development of 695 Grand Ave. I am opposed to **THIS** development due to the massive scale and what it will do to the neighborhood. Please enforce the existing zoning codes.

I am asking you to vote to **REJECT** this request at the upcoming City Council meeting.

Sincerely,

**Jeff Grady**  
**674 Lincoln Ave**  
**St. Paul, MN 55105**  
Mobile: 651-283-3459  
[jjgrady@mmm.com](mailto:jjgrady@mmm.com)



Jeff Grady | Key Account Chain Manager

**Food Service Supplies**

**3M Commercial Solutions Division**

3M Center, 220-12-W-F02 | St. Paul, MN 55144-1000 | United States

Mobile: 651-283-3459

[jjgrady@mmm.com](mailto:jjgrady@mmm.com)

-



| [3M.com](http://3M.com)

**From:** [Jeff Young](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [\\*CI-StPaul\\_Contact-Council](#); [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 3:45:47 PM

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Note that this is a resend since my first email had 'Jeff Young' and not my legal name 'Jeffery Young'.

Hello,

I am Jeffery Young. I reside at 753 Lincoln Avenue. I have lived at that address for 35 years.

My residence is one block from the proposed development at 695 Grand Ave. This would be the zoning file ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances.

I am adamantly opposed to the development as presented.

The East Grand Avenue Overlay document is the controlling document for all development in the area. This proposal violates that document. (The developers request to get variances shows this to be true.)

I am in favor of a vibrant Grand Avenue with a healthy mixture of commerce and residences. However, it must be within the scope of current rules for the east end of Grand Avenue. A mixed use development could be constructed which satisfies the current rules. I would support such a mixed use development within the rules of the Overlay.

Just because a developer wants to make more money doesn't mean that the local residents have to have their living conditions changed.

If there is a need to change the Overlay, then let's start that discussion regarding the future of Grand Avenue. In this manner, we can hopefully find a future which is beneficial to all parties.

As a side note, I don't understand the rationale by which the Planning Commission voted against a 10-1 public outcry against the proposed development. Can this be explained to me?

Thanks for your time,  
Jeffery Young  
753 Lincoln Ave

**From:** [Hartnett, James J.](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: ZF 21-269-061, 695 Grand Avenue CUP  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 3:49:48 PM

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To whom it may concern:

My family and I are long-time residents of Summit Hill, living at 1052 Lincoln Avenue for nearly 30 years.

We strongly oppose the new development at 695 Grand Avenue, because it does not comply with the zoning regulations that were enacted specifically to limit the scope and size of projects such as that currently being proposed.

What is the point of establishing zoning regulations through democratic processes if, whenever a developer wants to increase its profits with an oversized project, the City ignores the very regulations that were put in place to prevent such an outcome?

The Oxford Hill development at Oxford and Grand was profitable and successful. The notion that a project must be 30% larger than that project (as is the proposed 695 Grand project) to be profitable is simply untrue.

City officials need to enforce the existing zoning regulations, not ignore them every time a developer claims that it needs variances to make more money.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Hartnett  
1052 Lincoln Avenue  
C: 612 247 4885  
[james.hartnett@faegredrinker.com](mailto:james.hartnett@faegredrinker.com)  
\*\*\*\*\*

This message and any attachments are for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and/or privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message and any attachments. Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*



**From:** [Judy Miller](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** Dixie's on Grand Project  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:31:31 AM

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I am opposed to the building being planned at the site of Dixie's on Grand Ave. I have lived in this neighborhood for 53 years. What keeps me here is the charm and vibrancy of Grand Ave. For 41 of those years I lived at 828 Lincoln where parking, even with permit parking, has always been an issue. Now I live at 854 Linwood. If this project goes ahead you will lose potential customers on Grand and renters of apartment buildings. Potential home owners will not consider Grand Ave. as an asset but as a liability to owning or selling a home.

Please listen to the neighborhood where the majority of owners are against this project. If this project goes through I am sure other buildings will be razed and big buildings will go in and parking will be more of an issue.

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

Thanks you for our consideration

Judy Miller  
854 Linwood Ave.  
651 235 8391

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 695 Grand ZF #21-269-061  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:39:35 AM

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**From:** Julie Benolken <jbenolk@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 10, 2021 5:39 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** 695 Grand ZF #21-269-061

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hello,

I am opposed to rezoning 695 Grand Ave CUP and variances.

The area was zoned to take into account the historical look and feel of the area and throwing away these parameters does no one any good and will destroy the character of the neighborhood.

I am a fifth generation St Paul resident and I am appalled to contemplate the ruining of one of our most recognizable residential/commercial areas. I beg of you to keep to the parameters already established and do not throw them away. Keep 695 to 3 stories only!!!!

- I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made.

Julie Benolken  
Palace Ave  
Saint Paul- 55102

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [leslie koepke](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 6995 Grand Avenue CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 5:35:08 PM

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Hello-

I am a resident of St Paul and own unit #6 in the Chatlinwood Condo Association located at 215 S Chatsworth St.

As I stated in my email to the Summit Hill Association, and reiterated at their special Zoom meeting, **I am opposed to the ZF#21-269-061 6995 Grand Avenue CUP and variances.** The proposed building is totally out of character for the Grand Avenue community; it is too big, too tall, and if we want affordable housing, this proposal does not offer that. The SHA received 480 responses opposing the proposal (10 to 1 against the proposal), and yet voted in favor of it. I was astounded that the members of the SHA would so easily ignore the significant input of their neighbors, business-owners and friends. Likewise I was stunned that the St Paul Planning Commission ignored the overwhelming response opposing this proposal.

**I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules and would ask no exception be made.**

Thank you for your consideration of my input.

--

Leslie Koepke  
215 S Chatsworth St #6  
St Paul MN 55105  
C: 612.961.0996

# OPINION

Mike Burbach, Editor

St. Paul Pioneer Press TwinCities.com

## What is our recourse?

The St. Paul City PED-Zoning Committee voted on July 1 to approve a request to change the zoning of one lot at 695 Grand Avenue to allow a developer to build a five-story building. Compared to current, existing zoning code ordinances, the proposed structure will be 67% taller, have a 22% larger footprint and fail to transition, as required, to the lower density adjacent residential districts.

Concerns for negative impacts to the neighborhood are being overrun by the drive to expand financial gains. Public comment for this proposal was against by an enormous margin of 10-to-1 (480 against – 42 for), yet to no avail.

The zoning code is supposed to protect our neighborhoods from efforts by greedy developers who take value from the surrounding community to maximize their profits. What is our recourse when neighborhood councils and public officials fail to represent the interests of the area?

*Gary R. Todd, St. Paul*

July 7, 2021

OPPOSITION TO DIXIES/ 695 proposed project  
695 Grand CUP and Variances  
ZF#21-269-061

I am writing to strongly oppose the project that is being proposed by Peter Kenefick and Reuter Walton Developers to be placed at the current site of Dixies, Saji Ya and Emmetts restaurants at 695 Grand Avenue, Saint Paul.

The building as proposed will totally overwhelm the neighborhood. It is too tall, too massive, and too out of character with the historic neighborhood in which it would reside. Further, the structure fails to transition into the adjacent neighborhood. The resulting appearance will be that of a misplaced/ misfitting big box. It is an architectural intrusion into the heart of an historic neighborhood.

The structure will tower above its neighbors, stick out like a sore thumb, greatly tax an already prohibitive parking problem and present danger to pedestrians, cyclists and cars.

If this building is built, it will start a cascade of lookalike massive buildings that will change the essential character of Grand Avenue.

The 695 Grand Avenue development team has taken the position that the 695 Grand Avenue proposed project “fits” into the existing neighborhood since there is one tall building in the vicinity –Grand Place at 745 Grand Avenue.

I assert this comparison is invalid, disingenuous, highly misleading, and will set a terrible precedent.

#### Grand Place

Built in 1981, prior to East Grand Overlay District zoning

- Tallest building on Grand Avenue –65 feet tall
- Set back from Grand Avenue by approx. 30 feet
- Set back from its East and West neighbors by 12 feet
- Set back 26 feet from the alley
- Built on the north side of street so this building casts shadow onto a parking lot

Further, Grand Place is strictly a residential building –bringing no exacerbated traffic.

In contrast, the 695 project, basically “fills the available space” with **84 percent lot coverage**.

695 Grand would be:

- Set back from an alley that is already treacherously icy in winter by a mere 8 feet—with no physical barrier between the proposed building and the alley
- Setback from Grand Avenue by 3 feet
- Setback from its neighbors to the West by 6 feet
- Setback from its neighbors to the East by 3 feet
- Built on the North side of the street –thus will cast shadows on residential neighbors
- The 695 building will house 4 commercial restaurants/ retail places, whereas Grand Place is a residential building. Thus 695 will generate extra noise/ extra traffic, delivery trucks, extra trash pickups, extra visitors, cars etc. This is an invalid comparison.

I strongly urge the Zoning Committee, City of Saint Paul to reject the rezoning to T3, CUP and variance requests of the 695-development team.

Marilyn Bach  
9 Saint Albans Street South  
Saint Paul, MN 55105



**From:** [mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](mailto:*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary)  
**Subject:** FW: 695 Grand Project Rezoning -- Opposition from a Homeowner  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:49:40 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image5f34ea.PNG](#)

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**Mark Williamson**

Partner  
Lathrop GPM LLP  
500 IDS Center  
80 South 8th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55402  
Direct: 1.612.632.3379  
[mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com)  
[lathropgpm.com](http://lathropgpm.com)

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**From:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <[sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:42 AM  
**To:** Williamson, Mark D. <[mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: 695 Grand Project Rezoning -- Opposition from a Homeowner

Please do not send written comments/testimony regarding the Zoning Committee public hearing on July 15<sup>th</sup> I only handle Planning Commission meetings I am the Planning Commission secretary. These emails should be sent to [PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us) Thank you.

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**From:** [mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com) <[mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 7:44 AM  
**To:** \*CI-StPaul\_Contact-Council <[Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; [PED-ZoningCommittteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:PED-ZoningCommittteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us); Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <[sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** 695 Grand Project Rezoning -- Opposition from a Homeowner

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hello –

My name is Mark Williamson and I own a house at 693 Goodrich Avenue, very close to the proposed 695 Grand project site. I strongly oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application. There should be no exception to the existing zoning requirements as a three story building on that site would be large enough as it is. Please do NOT approve the project as currently proposed and please do NOT grant any zoning variances.



I would be happy to speak with anyone about my concerns and can be reached at the number below.

Thanks,

Mark



**Mark Williamson**

Partner

Lathrop GPM LLP  
500 IDS Center  
80 South 8th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Direct: 1.612.632.3379

[mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com](mailto:mark.williamson@lathropgpm.com)

[lathropgpm.com](http://lathropgpm.com)

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**From:** [Max Meketarian](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Automatic reply: Dixie"s Proposed "Development"  
**Date:** Friday, July 9, 2021 9:37:19 AM

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Here is the information you specifically requested:

Martin Meketarian  
696 Summit Ave  
St. Paul, MN 55105

Previous email:

Hello,

I am writing to voice my strong OPPOSITION with the proposed development of 695 Grand Ave. This is another attempt to circumvent the current zoning rules and lot coverage rules - in order to build luxury housing. The rents are to start at \$1400 for a studio apartment and additional costs for parking. Variances should not be provided for luxury-priced housing. Zoning rules are in place for a reason; this is precisely why. In addition, public safety will be strongly compromised with limited parking as well as traffic congestion. Please think of the people already living in the area, many have lived here for years; as well as the safety of all citizens. We can do better than this.

Sincerely,

Martin Meketarian

Long Time Summit Avenue Resident

On Jul 9, 2021, at 6:29 AM, \*CI-StPaul\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <[PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us)> wrote:

Thank you for submitting your comments. In order for your comments to be included in the public record, you must make sure that you have included your full name, address of residence, and zoning file number and property address of the zoning case for which you are submitting written testimony. Testimony without this information will not be provided to the Zoning Committee and will not be included in the record.

Please note: The deadline to receive written testimony is at 12 Noon the Wednesday prior to the Thursday Zoning Committee meeting during which the zoning case is to be heard.

**From:** [Mary](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 5:48:48 PM

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Dear Zoning Committee,

I am writing to oppose this variance. As a life long resident of St.Paul who has lived near and worked on Grand Ave I am so sad about what is being proposed in this historic neighborhood. Bigger is not better! More density on this corner is an abomination and will be hazardous for walkers, bikers and cars alike. I chose to move from 23 Saint Albans St S for my safety and that of family and friends coming to visit me. Please consider the safety of all visitors, renters and homeowners in and around this proposed development. It is not good for St. Paul and especially not for Grand Ave!

Mary Horan  
720 South Plaza Way  
Mendota Heights Mn 55120

Sent from my iPhone  
Mary Horan

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Opposition to 695 Grand Ave Rezoning  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 3:06:31 PM

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**From:** Meridith O'Toole <[mmotoole28@gmail.com](mailto:mmotoole28@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 2:43 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <[sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** re: Opposition to 695 Grand Ave Rezoning

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

I am a Summit Hill resident and feel this project is too big and too tall and not in character with the neighborhood I have lived in for over 60 years.

I am in opposition totally to this development as is. Parking will be worse - it will not enhance the neighborhood or attract new businesses.

--

Meridith M. O'Toole  
773 Lincoln Ave  
St. Paul MN 55105  
[mmotoole28@gmail.com](mailto:mmotoole28@gmail.com)

**From:** [PRISCILLA BREWSTER](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 4:22:36 PM

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Dear Secretary,

My residence in Summit Hill is at 10 Crocus Place and has been so for 60 years. I have seen many changes in this neighborhood; Grand Avenue being counted as in the neighborhood. The committee absolutely must enforce existing zone codes. I was told by the tax assessor that this area is the largest stand of Victorian homes in the United States. Please keep that character. The proposed building at 695 Grand is out of scale and inappropriate for the area. A mixed use building within the current building zone rules is acceptable, but with a different design. I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zone rules. Exceptions should NOT be made.

Most Sincerely,

Priscilla Brewster  
prisbrewster@aol.com

**From:** [privateartmn](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** I want good well designed and appropriate development on Grand Avenue. The 695 Grand Avenue is not well designed nor appropriately priced housing. The building is a prefab and not designed for the site. It will be plunked onto site. It is too massive, ...  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:47:34 PM

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25 St Albans S  
St Paul 55105

Keep existing zoning in place. No T3 and other variances

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [Ruth Stryker-Gordon](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** 695 Grand Ave.  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 10:28:54 AM

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I strongly oppose the current plans at the above address. I owned a condominium at 62 So, Dale (just a block away) for many years and know that more parking, more congestion, and an eye sore that completely overwhelms historical buildings in this area could lower the value of existing property.

Please listen to concerned citizens. Ruth Stryker-Gordon, 502 Lynnhurst Av.,E, St. Paul, MN 55104

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: OPPOSITION TO 695 GRAND / DIXIES CUP REZONING AND VARIANCES  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:38:24 AM

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**From:** St Albans Row Condo Association <sarca55105@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 10, 2021 5:00 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** OPPOSITION TO 695 GRAND / DIXIES CUP REZONING AND VARIANCES

**Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.**

Members of the Planning Commission and City Council:

Members of our Association participated in early "community outreach" activities with this developer for 695 Grand/Dixies via Zoom. Overwhelmingly, the concerns expressed by the community centered on the out of scale, overly large size, height, and bulk of the proposal, and the resultant negative effects caused by the size and intensity on the historic character, traffic and parking, sunlight, pedestrian safety, and quality of life. Not one of our main concerns was addressed in a meaningful manner. In fact, on June 3rd, 2021 the developer submitted a revised proposal **that was even taller than the original**. What is the a plight of landowner that requires 9, 10 and 15 foot ceilings?

Below is the text of the letter sent March 8, 2021 that was passed by unanimous consent of all owners. The concerns expressed in March are only greater now.

We are the owners of the seven condominium units that make up the St. Albans Row Condominium Association. These condos are located at 21-27 St. Albans Street South. They are on the west side of St. Albans directly north of the narrow alley that separates them from the parking lot at 695 Grand Avenue. This historic building was built in 1892. It was designed by famed architect Clarence Johnston and has been featured in many publications and a PBS special on Johnston because of its beautiful and unique features. We have worked hard over the years at significant cost to preserve and maintain this building not only for our use but also for the next generation.

We write because we are concerned that the proposed development plans for the "Dixie's" site will damage the look and feel of our beautiful neighborhood. We recognize that 695 Grand has favorable potential for development and we do not want to stand in the way of projects that may benefit our neighborhood. Our concerns center on three main issues: height and massing, proximity to the alley, and parking/traffic flow.

The present proposal is for a five story building that would come within 8 feet of the alley and would completely fill the lot except for a patio on Grand. As proposed, this structure would be significantly higher and larger than anything else in the neighborhood, block sunlight, reduce our property values, and create unsolvable traffic and parking problems. It would also violate existing zoning requirements that limit height to three stories and require distance between the



back of a building and the alley. The proposed structure is too high and the footprint is too large. The St. Albans block between Summit and Grand already has one of the highest densities in the city.

The scale of the proposed project would destroy much of the beauty and charm of this street that so many people enjoy. We urge all who will have a role in making decisions regarding this project to not allow the present push for development to destroy the efforts of all of those before us to preserve this unique and beautiful neighborhood. Thoughtful and careful development that respects the present character of the neighborhood is welcome. We firmly request that a revised design proposal be developed that would conform with existing zoning code requirements.

Board of Directors

SAINT ALBANS ROW CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

21-27 SAINT ALBANS STREET SOUTH | SAINT PAUL MINNESOTA 55105

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: 695 grand rezoning  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 1:34:30 PM

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**From:** peace md <peacemd@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 1:28 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Cc:** Judy Miller <jhm828@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** 695 grand rezoning

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hello

I am a summit hill owner on linwood ave. I am extraordinarily concerned regarding the 695 grand rezoning. It is troubling for several reasons.

I bought in the area for the character, history and personality of the area. It historically has not been overbuilt, it is well thought out and allows owners to live, study and learn in the area. People know of the area and reference it for their use. It has not followed the overbuild in any space allowed which is so common in many areas of our country. Grand avenue is small and it will not tolerate a larger volume of traffic not to mention a larger volume of people.

The proposed project is not only out of line for the character of the area but also sends a very clear message of encroachment. If there is any small space available then yes of course build as big and as large as possible. It is not right; it dishonors the history and character of the area. Grand avenue does not need more humans; it needs to be preserved. Grand avenue and the surrounding area sets standards for others to follow. It does not need to become like other areas; overbuilt. Please please please exhibit more vision and sensitivity to our neighborhood we have grown to love but now must protect.

Sharon Wolters, M.D.

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: ZF#21-269-061. 695 Grand CUP  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 13, 2021 8:27:55 AM

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**From:** Stephanie Scarrella <sshomeloan@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2021 4:45 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Cc:** sshomeloan@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** ZF#21-269-061. 695 Grand CUP

**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Hello Sonja,

I oppose the 695 Grand CUP and variances application.

I only support mixed use development that would comply with **current zoning rules.**

Why approve it their way when they can adjust the scale of the building? In addition, crossing the street there will become very dangerous. People living near by and their opinions are crucial as they live with this before, during and after construction. The current rules are in place for a reason.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Stephanie Scarrella  
672 Summit Ave #1  
St Paul Mn 55105

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Tom and Sally Patterson](#)  
**To:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [\\*CI-StPaul PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [\\*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#); [Noecker, Rebecca \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**Subject:** 985 Grand Avenue  
**Date:** Saturday, July 10, 2021 9:13:21 PM

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Reference ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and Variances

We live five short blocks south of 695 Grand Avenue. We are **STRONGLY OPPOSED** to the new development proposal for 695 Grand Avenue. It is wildly out of character for that section of Grand Avenue. It doesn't come close to complying with the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules. If a variance will be issued for a project this far outside existing zoning, zoning in St Paul in general will have been rendered effectively useless and meaningless. We don't understand and have not been given any valid reason for approving a project so substantially out of compliance. Grand Avenue is currently a nationally recognized model urban commercial/ residential area. If this project is approved largely as is, this will be the next step in turning Grand into just another urban street full of high rise, cookie cutter buildings. It looks to us as though the only reason to throw the Overlay and existing zoning into the trash is (1) increased tax revenue and/or (2) the developer(s) see a lot of money for him, her, it or them and therefore really wants it to go through. **THAT SHOULD NOT BE ENOUGH IN SAINT PAUL. PLEASE - FOLLOW YOUR OWN RULES!!!!**

We are not at all opposed to a remodeling or rebuilding of the facility largely within the principles of the Overlay and current zoning rules.

Tom and Sally Patterson  
703 Linwood Avenue  
St Paul 55105

**From:** [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment Re: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances  
**Date:** Monday, July 12, 2021 9:35:17 AM

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**From:** Ximena Silva-Avila <ximena.silvaavila@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 11, 2021 12:31 PM  
**To:** Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
**Subject:** Public Comment Re: ZF#21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

**Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.**

Dear Sonja Butler,

I oppose the 695 Grand rezoning, CUP and variances application for 695 Grand.

I am a Summit Hill renter, frequent shopper, and business owner. I am currently a neighbor of Dixies living at 657 Grand Ave. I have lived along Grand Ave all five years that I have lived in Saint Paul. I love living on Grand because of the historic charm that it has. Projects like the proposed building at 695 do not follow that same charm. It is out of character and I can't find any way that this project will give back to the neighborhood and community other than drive rents up, create traffic and parking problems, and be an eyesore on such a historic street. The existing zoning codes **should be enforced.**

I fully support mixed-use developments that would comply with current zoning rules. I believe that the neighborhood should and can welcome more density housing in ways that add to the neighborhood and community. As a business owner, I can say that I would not be able to afford the rent in this proposed building with the current floor plan that I enjoy at 657 Grand. 1400 for an alcove that is less than 600 sq ft. is not affordable for the average worker.

I support the East Grand Ave Overlay and the existing zoning rules; **exceptions should not be made.**

Thank you,  
Ximena Silva-Avila