

From: [Beth Sternitzky](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Ave Project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 1:57:33 PM

Here is the file number to enable my letter to be provided to the zoning committee, 21-269-061 695; Grand CUP with variances

Thank you,
Beth Sternitzky
977 Goodrich Ave.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Beth Sternitzky <bethsternitzky@gmail.com>
Subject: 695 Grand Ave Project
Date: July 13, 2021 at 1:40:09 PM CDT
To: PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Good Afternoon,

I am writing to express my thoughts around the redevelopment of 695 Grand Ave.

First off, change is always difficult and it is impossible to please 100% of the people that may be impacted by the change. But you are asked to look at what will be best for the entire area of Summit Hill.

The most direct neighbors will be most impacted by the physical change of a new, larger building on the current parking lot. This building will mostly change their view out the windows.

There has been much worry over the shading the new building will cause. I think it is very important to understand, shading does not mean darkness. I would argue, those buildings are already highly shaded by the current boulevard trees and if they lost those, they would mourn them and seek to replace them as quickly as possible. Neighbors expressed concern with the possible loss of the boulevard trees on the site of the proposed building at a previous meeting.

Another concern has been the height of the building. The building directly on the intersection of St. Albans and Grand Ave., is two stories taller than those across Grand Ave. As one drives down Grand Ave., it would be a very rare person that would think that condo building towers over the buildings on the other side of the street. There are many examples of buildings of varying heights co existing very well all throughout the Summit Hill area, Grand Ave and Dale, Selby and Western, Selby and Dale. Drive through any of these intersections to see how buildings with varying heights, look. I don't see that this concern has real merit. Five stories can easily belong with one, two and three story neighbors. Variation

of building heights adds dimension and character to an area. I believe if the proposal was a three story building, most every concern that had been raised, would have been raised and the same push back would have been seen.

I understand this project does not perfectly fit the district overlay plan. But I think serious consideration should be given to whether or not the overlay district plan is helping or hurting our neighborhood. From what I have read, the district overlay plan is about fifteen years old and it replaced a plan that was about fifteen years old. Times change, needs change. I would argue, if the overlay plan was being successful we would not be having this discussion, Grand Ave would still be thriving. But it is not.

It doesn't take too much to look back to the 1960's when property values were dropping. Homes were run down and many abandoned. What brought it back? People being willing to take a chance and invest in the neighborhood. Please look at what investments have been made along Grand Ave over the past 15 years. Has there been adequate investment to sustain, grow and keep Summit Hill thriving? Are the needs of the neighborhood being met? Just this week there was an article in the St. Paul Pioneer Press on the redevelopment of Robert St. in West St. Paul. Investments in the area by city and developers have made it a success.

An undeniable fact is, without new investment on Grand Ave, our beautiful neighborhood will continue its decline. Without new investment, property values will plummet. We have an opportunity here where a private investor, seeking no government dollars, is ready and willing to make a substantial investment in our city for the betterment of our neighborhood and city. Investment is necessary and this project will benefit our neighborhood as a whole for years and years to come. We will ALL lose if it is not allowed to happen. I ask you to please approve this project at 695 Grand Ave.

Respectfully,
Beth Sternitzky, 977 Goodrich Ave.

From: [Bill Bard](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Cc: [Hogan-Bard](#)
Subject: Re: 695 Grand Avenue Project
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 3:41:05 PM

Hello,

I'm resubmitting our letter of support (see below) for the 695 Grand Project to provide the zoning number of 21-269-061;695 Grand CUP with variances. Our full name is William Bard and Mary Hogan-Bard and our address is 578 Ashland Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102. Let us know if you need anything else. Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Bard

Sent from my iPad

> On Jul 14, 2021, at 11:55 AM, Bill Bard <bill.bard@icloud.com> wrote:

> Dear Committee and Council Member Noecker,

>

> We are writing in support of the 695 Grand Avenue Project. We are long time residents of Saint Paul and have lived in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood for over 30 years. We know the Kenefick family well and support their vision for the property and believe it is good for Saint Paul and Grand Avenue.

> We live in the historic district of Saint Paul and support historic preservation. We understand and respect the concerns of some of the neighbors regarding the size and height of the proposed building. However, the city and metro area has grown significantly in the past 30 plus years and we believe the city needs to adapt to the changing demographics. The project team are proposing a beautiful building that will attract more residents to the neighborhood, increase business activity and increase the tax base. They have done a very good job of addressing the concerns of the immediate neighbors as best they can while maintaining an economically viable project. If a smaller project was truly feasible, they probably would have done it.

> Saint Paul has too many underutilized properties. This will be a significant improvement for the city and the neighborhood. Therefore, we hope you will support the project and help it to move forward. Thank you for your consideration.

>

> Bill Bard and Mary Hogan-Bard

> 578 Ashland Avenue

> Saint Paul

> Sent from my iPad

From: [Deepa Pai](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand project
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 1:04:38 AM

I just wanted to offer my support for the new apartment project on Grand Avenue. This is a great opportunity to help redevelop a declining Grand Avenue. We should embrace progress and investment rather than stifle development. An apartment building full with tenants who will spend money in the neighborhood and pay taxes is better than a parking lot. How are you saving the character of a neighborhood by preserving a parking lot? Please work with the developers rather than reject a project because it is a little too high or needs some variances. We should be lucky that we have people that still believe in Grand and want to make it better.

Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Emily Larson](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Support for Request - 695 Grand Project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 12:57:00 PM

I am writing to express my support for the zoning variances requested for the 695 Grand Project. The city needs this project for many reasons, including:

- increasing the vibrancy of the Grand Avenue retail/restaurant/residential district
- increasing housing density along a public transportation corridor
- expanding the tax base
- expanding infrastructure in a way that supports public safety
- maintaining job opportunities

Please approve the variances, which I understand are up for a vote on July 15.

Thank you!

From: [Emma Burns](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Ave
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 12:40:52 PM

Hello,

I am reaching out today to express my support for the proposed development at 695 Grand Avenue. As renters in the immediate vicinity - Summit & Dale - for more than four years my husband and I consider ourselves fortunate to call the neighborhood home. We have always prioritized living in vibrant, active communities and for us renting allows us to do so. The persistent narrative that renters are less committed or connected to their neighborhood continues to frustrate and disappoint us.

Over the past months I have heard a small number of people express very loud and passionate concerns about the potential height of this building. I do not believe that the building as proposed is inconsistent with the neighborhood "feel" but instead feel that this project and the density of new neighbors it would bring as proposed would be incredibly beneficial for our area. The effect of the East Grand Ave Overlay District has been a total halt in investment and development along Grand. This is unsustainable.

Commercial corridors like Grand Ave thrive when there are strong residential populations to support them and our community needs more housing options at every price point. My hope is that we will continue to see the type of interest from investors and developers that we have in recent months and years for many more to come, but my fear is that our track record for denying these proposals will put a stop to that. This project is an opportunity to be forward thinking. To let short-sighted and unsubstantiated concerns like shadier backyards during the winter months for less than five homes, or the everpresent chorus of "if only it were one story shorter" from a minute population would be completely out of sync with the vision for the Saint Paul laid out in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and jeopardize our ability to support new and existing restaurants and retail along Grand Ave in the future. I hope that the volume of a few does not leave you with the impression that they speak for all of us.

Thank you for considering our perspective.

All the best,
Emma Burns

610 Summit

From: [Heather Long](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 7:53:15 AM

I'm sending my positive thoughts in regards to this great project that is going to hopefully happen on Grand ave.
Please consider and vote to have this project move forward.

Regards,
Heather Long

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Holly Weinkauf](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Ave Project - Resending with required information
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:25:14 AM

Dear PED Zoning Committee Secretary and Councilmember Noecker,

I'm writing in support of granting the variances needed for the 695 Grand Ave. project to move forward. I have owned a business on Grand Ave. for 10 years and have lived in the neighborhood for 13 years. This project would bring needed density to our neighborhood and much needed new great energy to Grand Ave.

The property owners and development team have been incredibly responsive to the concerns of the neighborhood and have made improvements to their plan based on community feedback. They have demonstrated they will continue to be good community partners on Grand Ave. The project also has broad community support.

I'm excited about the positive impact this project holds for a re-energized Grand Ave.

Thank you for your consideration,

Holly Weinkauf, Owner
Red Balloon Bookshop
891 Grand Ave., St Paul, MN 55105

Home address:
997 Portland Ave, St Paul, MN 55104

Zoning File Number: 21-269-061 695; Grand CUP with variances

--

Holly Weinkauf (she, her) // Owner
Red Balloon Bookshop // 651-224-8320 // redballoonbookshop.com

From: [Jeremy Dowd](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Fwd: Support for 695 Grand Ave project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 2:27:48 PM

Full name: Jeremy Dowd
Residence Address: 385 Laurel Ave. #211 Saint Paul, MN 55102
Zoning File: 21-271-810
Property Address of Zoning case: 695 Grand Ave. Saint Paul, MN 55105

JEREMY DOWD

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jeremy Dowd** <jeremydowd@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Jul 13, 2021 at 2:01 PM
Subject: Support for 695 Grand Ave project
To: <aparritz@reuterwalton.com>, <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, <Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Ari Parritz, Councilmember Noecker, and St Paul Planning Commission,

I am writing in support of the Kenefic Family and Reuter-Walton's proposal to redevelop the 695 Grand Avenue property in Saint Paul. I have attended several of the presentations by Peter Kenefic and Ari's team at Reuter Walton and think the level of engagement and compromise with the community has exceeded what previous developers have considered in the past. I've been surprised by the response by many members of the Summit Hill community who seem to think this development degrades the historic character of the neighborhood and have resorted to fallacies to argue this development will be problematic to the entire community due to their aversion to a small change in their personal status quo.

The positives I have seen in the proposed draft of the development is:

- 79 families will have new market-rate housing options within the district
- Two existing small businesses will have purpose-built facilities that will allow them to remain sustainable in the long-term.
- Two new retail spaces will be created in an area that could benefit from more daytime/business hour activity.
- Almost 100 off-street parking spaces will be contained within the building where a surface lot currently sits.
- Alley usage has been eliminated to alleviate neighboring properties' concerns about delivery traffic and restaurant garbage odors--a large improvement from the existing arrangement.
- Brick facing, proportional windows, progressive setbacks, and a generous patio space fits many of the neighborhood's standards to complement historic elements--as well as making the sidewalk/pedestrian space feel more open than the current property.
- The tax revenue generated by the development will contribute more to the city than the existing property.

- The increase of daytime and evening foot traffic by new residents and business patrons will create a sense of security and vibrancy on the corner.
- The modern apartments will allow aging and differently abled residents to live in the district where many of the historic buildings lack elevators and ADA compliant design.
- A new large property will have local ownership--much of the problematic commercial space existing on Grand Avenue remains vacant due to far-flung ownership divorced of the need to rent affordable space so small businesses can maintain tenancy.
- Existing apartments will have more competition; causing owners to make housing more affordable or upgrade their existing offerings to be competitive to prospective renters.
- The development fits nicely in the objectives of the city's 2040 plan, for which Summit Hill has difficulty participating in with it's large concentration of single family and historical structures.

This development is a much needed "shot in the arm" for Grand Avenue at a time that that developers would rather avoid the restrictions and outright NIMBY-ism of some neighbors that has caused under-utilized properties in the Summit Hill district to stagnate, risking the viability of existing businesses and ability of residents to get their commercial needs met in their own neighborhood. This fearful mindset has cost business owners and the Summit Hill district in the form of no new multipurpose or significant multifamily developments being built since 2006--these projects have all gone to adjoining districts that are eager to welcome new residents and businesses.

I've been impressed by Mr. Kenefic's patience and willingness to spend so much time and money to adapt his project to address neighbors' concerns; further his participation in getting variances approved ala-carte shows his appreciation of the need to complement the surroundings in the district. His family has lifelong ties to the Summit Hill neighborhood and at a time when small business owners like him need support, the neighborhood should welcome his investment.

This letter is written only in my capacity as a private individual and longtime member of the Saint Paul community; it is not to be taken as the statement of any group, company, or organization I serve as an employee, board member, or advisor. I rented property within the Summit Hill/District 16 planning commission boundaries upon moving to Saint Paul in 2006 but have since resided 6 blocks outside the district boundaries; I patronize businesses within the district on a daily basis.

JEREMY D.
Saint Paul, MN

From: [Joe Keeley](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Support
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 9:19:18 AM

To: Planning Commission

From: Joe Keeley, Homeowner, 3 Crocus Hill, St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: 695 Grand Ave, St. Paul

Zoning File #: 21-269-061

Dear Planning Commission;

First off, thank you for the important work you do in and for our city. Secondly, I would like to express my significant support for the Dixies redevelopment project as proposed. I have joined all listening sessions and would like to commend the owner and developer for listening to the concerns and adapting to the requests including underground parking, use of historically appropriate materials and other expensive changes that they didn't have to accommodate. They did this in the face of consistent heckling from very passionate but dare I say disrespectful and immature opposing stakeholders.

Summit Hill and St. Paul in general needs to be a more friendlier place for investment. If we don't we will continue to lose investment to Mendota Heights, Edina and other more friendly places for developers and therefore lose our opportunity to increase our tax base and create density for local businesses to pull from. One thing that the last few years has taught us is that Grand Ave operates on the razor's edge between a thriving commerce district to live, shop and play and a "has-been" street of missed opportunities withering on the vine. Between losing a few proposed investment opportunities in recent years history (Lunds redevelopment comes to mind) and COVID creating many empty storefronts, we must be a place that welcomes investment and density or Grand Ave and Summit Hill as a whole will never meet its potential. There are so many communities that would beg for outside investment and we have a local family begging to invest tens of millions. Let us not get in our own way.

On a micro and personal level, my wife and I live in a historic summit hill home and we do so because we love St. Paul and all that it has to offer. However, for us particularly, if Grand ave does not continue to offer a wide range of attractive options that can only come with increased investment, we, like many of our friends have already done, may consider places that offer the

same appeal (Edina, Wayzata) or different options that are close by (Mendota, Sunfish) for much less of a price tag.

Regards,

Joe Keeley
3 Crocus Hill
St. Paul, MN 55102
Regards,

Joe Keeley
651-230-3889

From: [Jon Reynolds](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Cc: [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Re: 695 Grand Development Comments - # 21-269-061 695; Grand CUP with variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:52:25 AM

Hi I'm resending this comment with the included zoning file number: # 21-269-061 695;
Grand CUP with variances

Hello, I'm a neighbor of the proposed development at 695 Grand by the Kenefick and Reuter Walton teams. I just wanted to drop a line of support for these variances and the project as a whole. I personally would like to see more development and density in our city, especially along commercial corridors like Grand. We need a growing tax base to fund affordable housing and economic justice programs in the city, and this project would add to the tax base. We need more housing (even this luxury stuff), and while this project is designed for rich folks, I want to live in an economically diverse neighborhood. My hope is that the City of Saint Paul can partner with the county, State and Federal government to leverage other revenue streams to adequately fund affordable housing development. But please, make it easy for anyone and any developer to invest in and contribute to Saint Paul's community. Please support this project and others like it.

Sincerely,

--

Jon Reynolds
829 Laurel Ave, St Paul, MN 55104

From: [Kevin Somdahl-Sands](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Supporting 695 Grand development
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 2:22:24 PM

St Paul Planning Commission: I'd like to submit a letter in support of the 695 Grand project largely as proposed. I believe a 4 to 5 story building is compatible with neighboring buildings across Grand and across Asbury. Also, St Paul needs more housing and denser development to enhance neighborhood walkability and improve the tax base. And I believe development of this scale is necessary to help our community fight global warming. I'm certainly not aware of all details, and so perhaps some accommodations to people with concerns could result in height reduction or setbacks of upper floors. That said, the argument that this building does not "fit the neighborhood character" ignores the buildings across the street from this site, and further down Grand at Dale. Also, the large Grand & Oxford building seems comparable in many ways, and it has fit in with the neighborhood despite much opposition when it was built over a decade ago. I think a large building of this type will easily fit into Grand Avenue and make it even better for our entire community.

Thanks for your consideration.

Kevin Somdahl-Sands
1220 Seminary Ave
St Paul, MN 55104
651-336-7678

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From: [Kris Sheldon](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Update on the 695 Grand Project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 10:34:55 PM

Hello! I'm writing on behalf of the 695 Grand Ave. project.

It is my opinion that this project should proceed. It preserves 2 existing successful restaurants, expands the tax base, and expands active retail frontage, including a brand new outdoor plaza. This would help with being a pedestrian and bike-friendly experience. The 80 new high-quality residential units will be welcomed by new and existing families that are already in the neighborhood.

This project has earned the support of the Summit Hill Association district council AND the rezoning from the planning commission.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,
Kristi I. Sheldon

From: [Michael Levitt](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand project
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 11:18:13 PM

Dear Planning Commissioners and Councilmember Noecker's Office:

I support the requested variances sought by the 695 Grand project team, file 21-269-061.

My family and I own 841 St. Clair and have loved living in the Summit Hill neighborhood. As working young professionals with a growing family we enjoy the dynamic balance between the residential and commercial elements of the neighborhood. Projects like 695 Grand are important reminders to families like ours that the neighborhood and the city are committed to investing in the growth of commercial corridors, expanding the tax base, and providing new and sustainable housing options to a growing population desperately in need of new housing of all types.

I understand that the Summit Hill Association conducted an extensive review of the project and supported its design and program, and recommended that the project team seek variances in lieu of a rezone relative to the East Grand Ave overlay. This makes sense to me as a practical way to allow the investment to move forward without presupposing a future for the overlay.

We should continue to find ways to support investment in our community, even if it is at times startling to those who have lived in the neighborhood for decades. For family's like mine, we want and need to see new investment so that the next generation of Summit Hill residents can experience a Grand Ave that is alive and thriving, much as the past generation has done. To do this the Ave needs continual support for projects like 695 Grand.

On behalf of us and many of our neighbors, please support these applications and allow us to welcome new residents, allow existing residents to downsize comfortably close to their longtime homes, and allow for the preservation of existing businesses which critically need this investment.

Thank you.

From: [Michele Molstead](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: Automatic reply: 695 Grand Avenue variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:14:00 AM

Greetings,

I am writing to share my strong support for the proposed mixed-use development at 695 Grand Ave, NW corner at St. Albans Street, a few blocks from my residence. The case number is: **21-269-061**.

My support is based on three issues:

- Our neighborhood's inequitable East Grand Overlay policy
- Our city's housing crisis
- Our planet's climate crisis

Research involving urban density and its effects on inequity, housing, and the environment is solid, as I'm certain you're much more aware of than I. The proposed development addresses each of the above issues in a positive manner.

I also commend the developers and architects for their public engagement process, which went beyond my expectations, and for creating a design that fits nicely with the neighborhood character. I would happily live, eat, drink, and shop there, and will encourage others to do the same.

In summary, I request that the Zoning Committee grant the zoning variances needed for the 695 Grand Avenue project.

Best regards,
Michele Molstead
702 Holly Avenue #2
Saint Paul MN 55104

On Jul 14, 2021, at 11:03 AM, [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#) <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.

*We will be making an exception to receive written testimony up until 4:00 p.m. regarding the application for 695 Grand.

From: Dan Marshall
To: ["Cl-SPaul_PFD_ZoningCommitteeSecretary"](#); [#Cl-SPaul_Ward2](#); [#Cl-SPaul_Ward4](#)
Subject: Reiterating our Business's Support for the 695 Grand Ave Development
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 4:48:54 PM

To the members of the Saint Paul Planning Commission:

Below is our original letter of support for the proposed multifamily development at 695 Grand Avenue. In the weeks since this project was approved by the Summit Hill Association, we've taken note of a vocal group of neighbors who strongly oppose this project. In our opinion, all of their arguments in opposition to the project serve their own self interests and not the greater needs of the neighborhood.

These critics have taken the role of amateur architecture critics, making highly subjective and unreasonable claims about the design of the proposed building, which is arguably the most attractive project Saint Paul has seen in years.

They've also taken on the mantle of affordable housing advocates, despite the fact that they argue for a shorter building, procedural delays, for more parking, and for architectural enhancements, all of which serve to increase the cost of the building and decrease its affordability. If those arguing for affordability actually wanted to make it easier to build affordable housing in Saint Paul, they'd be arguing for greater building height, less restrictive zoning, and fewer parking places.

Finally, opponents argue that if this project is approved, it will be followed by many more just like it on Grand Avenue. We truly hope so! Grand Avenue is both a commercial and transit corridor. Building more housing here is beneficial to all of the neighborhood's businesses. It's truly a great place to live, work, and shop and we should be welcoming more people to live here.

We urge you to please take the opponent's arguments against this excellent project with a grain of salt. They do not speak for the neighborhood or the city as a whole. We urge you to approve this project and grant it the variances it requires so that it can be built as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dan Marshall, Abigail Adelsheim-Marshall, and Millie Adelsheim
owners, Mischief Toy Store
818 Grand Avenue

To the members of the Saint Paul Planning Commission:

Our family business would like to express our enthusiastic support for Dixie's proposed multifamily development at 695 Grand Avenue, which is just down the street from us. This is exactly the type of investment Grand Avenue needs in order to remain vibrant and relevant.

As you know, the property requires rezoning to allow this development because of the East Grand Avenue Overlay, which we view to be harmful and inequitable public policy. Our city faces a growing budget shortfall due to insufficient tax base and a housing crisis leading to record homelessness. And our planet faces accelerating climate change. All three of these problems can be addressed by dramatically increasing urban residential density. We therefore believe we have a moral obligation to build density everywhere in the city, especially on commercial transit corridors like Grand Avenue.

Additionally, our city and nation are in the midst of a vast contraction of brick and mortar retail. We've been selling toys in Saint Paul for 23 years; when we first opened, we were one of 5 toy stores in the city. Now, we're the only toy store. Grand Avenue retail in general has also contracted dramatically and we now have many empty storefronts creating a sense of blight.

Building urban density helps address this problem as well. This project alone would bring 79 new families to Grand Avenue, all of whom would be within walking distance of our store and all the other shops and restaurants Grand Avenue has to offer.

We'd also like to commend the architects and owners of the Dixies property for designing a building that elegantly complements the character and scale of Grand Avenue. We believe this project will be one of the signature buildings in the neighborhood.

We urge you to support this project by granting it any zoning changes or variances it may require. We also urge you to repeal the East Grand Avenue Overlay so that Grand Avenue can turn a corner and build a brighter future.

Thank you,

Abigail Adelsheim-Marshall, Millie Adelsheim, and Dan Marshall,
owners of Mischief Toy Store
818 Grand Avenue

From: [Patricia Merwin](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary; #CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Project
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 2:28:58 PM

Hello,

As a resident of the Summit Hill Area, I am very pleased and thankful for the support of the project at 695 Grand Avenue by the Summit Hill Association, City Zoning and the City of Saint Paul.

I view the project on Grand Avenue as updating our neighborhood with new housing, offering updated retail space and preserving two successful restaurants on the East end of Grand Avenue. The idea of an outdoor plaza leads the way for more outdoor spaces along Grand Avenue where all visitors can socialize and experience the atmosphere of the Ramsey Hill Area.

I believe this project will strive to incorporate equity at different levels of the project for business and residents.

And, such a project should expand the city's tax base and be a model for other investments along Grand Avenue.

Lastly, if I have missed the deadline to express support of the 695 Grand Avenue Project, I am sorry, but I just had to send my thoughts and say how excited I am for progress and updates to our neighborhood.

All the best and thank you,

Patricia Merwin
785 Goodrich Avenue
Saint Paul, MN. 55105

From: Peter C Brown
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand proposal
Date: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 4:16:09 PM

To the Zoning Committee:

I write to ask your approval of variances required for the 695 Grand Avenue project proposed by Reuter Walton.

My wife and I, in our mid-70's, are among those who would like to stay in the neighborhood while freeing up our house on Fairmount Avenue for a young family. We'll continue to pay taxes and patronize the local retailers and restaurants where we have longstanding relationships, and our block on Fairmount will continue the cycle of regeneration that we have watched over our decades here.

This is the kind of development that helps a city and its neighborhoods adapt to the times. It would be a shame to miss this chance.

Sincerely,

Peter Brown
874 Fairmount Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

From: [Roger Hamilton](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Supporting 695 Grand variances request
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 8:41:40 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi there,

We are encouraging you to support the variance request on this important project. I am a Senior Vice President with BankCherokee & we have a long-time branch on Grand Avenue. We support this for a variety of reasons, but most importantly, it's the exact type of project required to support some currently struggling retail businesses on the avenue. Grand Ave. simply needs more density and this project provides 80 new residential units.

We have also been privileged to work with the Kenefick family over the past several years. As you may know, they are a St. Paul family, Peter is very active on the avenue & has the best interest of area small businesses. Obviously, their restaurants have been adversely impacted by Covid & these same challenges being faced by the other businesses. This project will contribute to the future viability of their restaurants, but also all businesses along the avenue.

Thank you for your anticipated support!

Roger Hamilton

SVP & Commercial Lender

999 Village Center Drive | North Oaks, MN 55127
p: 651.291-6263 | c: 612-418-7829 | f: 651.483-6691
rhamilton@bankcherokee.com

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From: [Scott Berger](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: 695 Grand citizen comment
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:11:33 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today with regard to the proposed development at 695 Grand Avenue in Saint Paul.

Grand Avenue is a place that gets visitors from throughout the city and east metro, if not beyond. However, in recent years, the fabric of Grand Avenue has been faltering. Retail has changed and a combination of big-box retail and further emphasis on shopping close to home has potentially drained the number of shoppers making their way to Grand Ave. More residents on Grand would also mean more people spending their dollars locally.

Furthermore, there is an increasing need for housing close to jobs and destinations. Less travel means more multi-modal (bike/walk/bus) options and an overall reduction in vehicle miles traveled. Housing above retail as proposed here is a way to address transportation emissions and congestion.

Housing is also at an all-time premium and we need more housing at all income levels, which yes does include new construction and premium pricing units. More supply, according to basic economic theory, should push down overall prices for mid-market units, among other factors. We should simultaneously continue to work for ways to make jobs stronger (paying a living wage) and housing affordable to everyone.

This proposal would significantly improve the tax base for the city, which desperately needs more non-tax-exempt properties in highly-taxed districts such as this one. This can actually lower costs throughout the entire city.

Finally, the current state of this property is tired, unpleasant, and severs the fabric and cohesiveness of Grand Ave. Surface parking is an eyesore. The proposal is one of the best thought-out and best designed large projects I have seen in the city in years and removes the unsightly and expansive parking lot.

As a neighbor and frequent visitor to this area and these restaurants, I therefore would like to **STRONGLY EXPRESS MY SUPPORT** for this redevelopment and project.

Scott Berger
1452 Ashland Ave

From: [Scott Fares](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: In support of 695 Grand project 21-269-061 695; Grand CUP with variances
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:51:30 AM

Hello,

As a 35-year St Paul resident living in Merriam Park (1910 Dayton) and a Grand Avenue business owner (Wet Paint 1684 Grand), I would like to express my support for the advancement of the project at 695 Grand Avenue with the requested variances. I have participated in the open meetings that Peter Kenefick and his team from Reuter Walton have hosted to answer questions and gather input from the community. I am impressed with the scope of modifications they have made to make this plan work better for the neighborhood and the care they are taking to make it a net contribution to the area's livability and growth. I feel that it is important that we preserve local businesses and neighborhoods and that includes allowing them to grow and develop as their needs change. I think that the new building will be a modernization that keeps the spirit of the Avenue and the surrounding area and allows that business to remain healthy and competitive, and stay in St Paul.

Overall, I am in favor of the city's plan to build density and would very much like it to be along the premier commercial corridor in town. I think that the people are coming to the metro and if we don't welcome them to Grand they may end up elsewhere. This structure will continue to be the home of beloved restaurants and make them even more of a destination. The owner and developer have realistically addressed the needs and suggestions of their neighbors, customers, employees, and future residents and those plans have been approved by the Planning Commission and the Summit Hill District Council.

I hope that the groups addressed here will also agree that this is a solid project with solid economic and quality-of-life benefits for St Paul and for Grand. Grand is my home and an important part of my business' brand and I would very much like to see it stay healthy and grow with the metro area with responsible changes like this project will bring.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opinion and please feel free to contact me.

Best regards,
Scott

Scott Fares

Co-Owner
Wet Paint Artists' Materials and Framing

1684 Grand Ave | St Paul, MN 55105
651 698 6431 | scott@wetpaintart.com
www.wetpaintart.com

From: [Senia Tuominen](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: Support for the 695 Grand development
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 11:10:38 AM

My resident address was requested; it is 1891 Dayton Avenue in St. Paul. My business address is 1654 Grand Avenue.

Thank you,
Senia Tuominen

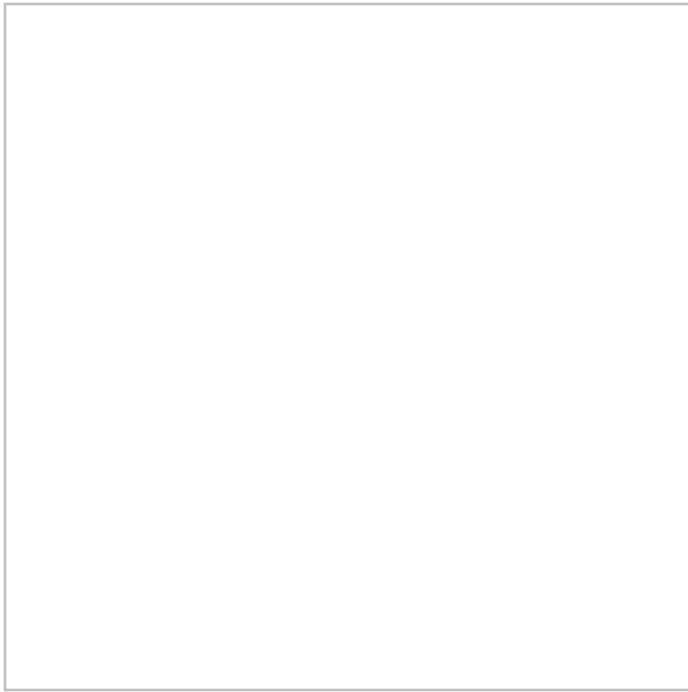
On Wed, Jul 14, 2021 at 11:05 AM Senia Tuominen <senia@healinginsightonline.com> wrote:

To the St. Paul Planning Commission Secretary:

I am both a resident of St. Paul and a Grand Avenue business owner and I'm writing in full support of the Kenefick family's development proposal for 695 Grand. Our city is at a crossroads to decide whether it will move forward with a new vision for Grand Avenue's small businesses or whether it will remain stagnant and see our small businesses die. As a business owner on Grand for 13 years, I've watched business property taxes and business rents skyrocket, which have made it difficult for small businesses to survive and necessitated that big national corporations occupy many of the retail and restaurant locations on the Avenue. If property taxes aren't going to be reduced then the city needs to embrace new and innovative options for small businesses to remain viable. The Kenefick family's development provides a new vision to enable local small businesses to stay in St. Paul, and they've worked closely with the neighborhood to garner and incorporate as much feedback as they can into their plan, which large corporations headquartered outside our city have no impetus to do.

On a personal level, the Kenefick family has been one of the most positive ambassadors of small business on Grand Avenue. They have always supported other small businesses and been the first to sponsor and participate fully in events that promote Grand Avenue. I can't think of a better family to invest in the Avenue.

Best regards,
Senia Tuominen
St. Paul resident
Owner, Healing InSight



651-792-5222

www.healinginsightonline.com

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-----Original Message-----

From: Sharyn Pesses <SPesses@stpaulfed.org>

Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2021 3:14 PM

To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Development

I am in complete support of the Kendrick and Reuter Walton Development Team's plans for Grand Ave. I've lived in St.Paul my whole life and I feel strongly that it's time for Grand Ave. Take charge of it's own destiny.

Sharyn E Pesses

Associate Development Director

St. Paul Jewish Federation

2353 Youngman Ave #117

The Plaza

St. Paul, Mn 55116

Sharyn E Pesses

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sherry Johnson](#)
To: [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#); [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: Support for 695 Grand Avenue
Date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021 9:27:32 AM

Hello. I'm writing a personal letter of support for the 695 Grand development. Though I am a Summit Hill Boardmember and past Co-Chair of the Grand Avenue Task Force, this letter does not reflect an official position of the Summit Hill Association, GABA, MGCC, nor the Task Force.

That said, I've been quite close to this and to stories about past developments proposed for Grand Avenue. This story is one of fear, trauma, and misinformation.

The influx of negative comments via the petition and quoting of the Neighborhood Plan survey should be seen within context. The East Grand Avenue Overlay District is being reevaluated shortly after our Neighborhood Plan is finished at SHA, as there is some evidence that the Overlay is damaging the local economy it had meant to save. Unfortunately, a lot of people conflate the important work of historic preservation and small-business support with the Overlay as written. The desire to simplify and create a binary choice about the Overlay only serves those whose aims are anti-density, anti-renter, and anti-change. And these folks have been working double-time to amplify that binary message, to the point of spreading misinformation.

This development isn't perfect, but it would house 80 families, provide downsizing opportunities for seniors, invigorate transit on Grand, keep and grow small businesses, provide much-needed public space & street activation, and downplay single-occupancy-vehicle lifestyles. The variance from the EGAOD would greenlight these important benefits while giving SHA time to figure out what to keep and what to change about this controversial zoning overlay that has likely put downward pressure on the Grand market for some time, in ways its creators could not have predicted.

The one thing I agree with detractors about this development: I wish there were some amount of affordability built in. But until we have more affordability funding, we have no "carrot," and until we have a much-needed inclusionary zoning policy move from the City, we have no "stick." It's a heartbreaking situation, but it's not enough to deny the variances.

I fear the trauma and isolation of the pandemic has made some of my neighbors more afraid for Grand's future, more afraid of change, prone to conspiracy-thinking, and unable to think critically about the future we want.

"This building will make me less safe." --despite the outsized privilege of the SH neighborhood and the crime-prevention benefits of removing a surface lot and activating the street

"This building will make it harder for me to park." --despite the dire need for decreasing dependence on single-occupancy vehicles

"This building will raise my rent." --despite multiple sources suggesting otherwise for districts like ours

"This building is NOT Grand Ave." --despite Grand having had multiple and increasingly diverse identities over time

Fear--particularly fears rooted in identity--should never be the basis of zoning decisions. 695 Grand needs to be built.

Sherry Pofahl Johnson

820 Osceola Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55105

Zoning file #21-269-061

Re: 695 Grand Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55105