



APPLICATION FOR APPEAL

Department of Planning and Economic Development
Zoning Section
1400 City Hall Annex
25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1634
(651) 266-6589

1102 21 DES
RECEIVED IN D.S.I.

Zoning Office Use Only
File #: 11-275450
Fee: 440
Tentative Hearing Date: _____

APPELLANT

Name Union Park District Council
Address 1570 Concordia Ave, Suite LL100
City St. Paul St. MN Zip 55104 Daytime Phone 645-6887

PROPERTY LOCATION

Zoning File Name Meridian Development
Address / Location 650 Pelham Blvd., St. Paul MN

TYPE OF APPEAL: Application is hereby made for an appeal to the:

Planning Commission, under provision of Chapter 61, Section 701, Paragraph c of the Zoning Code, of a decision made by the Planning Administrator or Zoning Administrator

OR

City Council, under provision of Chapter 61, Section 702, Paragraph a of the Zoning Code, of a decision made by the Planning Commission

Date of decision: September 2, 20 11 File Number: 11-73

GROUND FORS APPEAL: Explain why you feel there has been an error in any requirement, permit, decision or refusal made by an administrative official, or an error in fact, procedure or finding made by the Planning Commission.

Please see attached.

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SEP 12 2011

Attach additional sheets if necessary

Appellant's Signature [Signature] Date 9/12/11 City Agent T. Beach

Union Park District Council
1570 Concordia Ave, Suite LL100
St Paul, MN 55104

September 12, 2011

Saint Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd
St Paul, MN 55102

Re: Planning Commission Resolution 11-73 regarding Site Plan 10-906716

Appeal of the Saint Paul Planning Commission's September 2, 2011 Denial of the Union Park District Council's Site Plan Appeal for Meridian Industrial Center at 650 Pelham Boulevard

The Union Park District Council (UPDC) appeals the Planning Commission's September 2, 2011 decision to allow for construction of a 68,000 sq. ft. building at 650 Pelham Boulevard. Tom Beach, Zoning Specialist of the City of Saint Paul, initially approved this Site Plan on July 20, 2011.

The Union Park District Council has reviewed the Site Plan and revisions to that plan set forth by the Saint Paul Planning Commission on September 2nd, documents approved by City zoning staff the Port Authority's presentation at a public meeting held by the UPDC on June 27th, 2011, relevant City zoning codes, and in numerous meetings with City staff, Port Authority staff, and community representatives.

Based on this review, it is the position of the UPDC that the approval of this Site Plan is not soundly based in conjunction with city-approved planning documents for the site, nor in the best interest of the City of Saint Paul or its residents. Because of this, the UPDC must conclude that the Site Plan will benefit a single developer while failing to mitigate adverse effects in the immediate neighborhood and the City.

The Planning Commission has rejected UPDC's appeal in error. The UPDC appreciates the two conditions added to the Site Plan by the Planning Commission: a sidewalk on Pelham Boulevard and a pedestrian connection to the southwest corner of the building from Pelham; however, the UPDC's and the community's remaining concerns have not been addressed.

The Union Park District Council urges the Saint Paul City Council to reverse the decision of the Planning Commission to deny appeal 11-73 and asks the City Council to instead uphold the UPDC's appeal.

The following details the UPDC's rationale for its appeal:

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1. The site plan is not consistent with planning documents for the site.
2. The City Code encourages buildings to 'hold the corner' on sites at intersections.
3. There was no community design process to effectively resolve community concerns with the project.
4. The City Council did not zone the site TN as recommended in planning documents.

1. The Meridian Industrial Project Site Plan is not consistent with content in the following planning documents:

- Saint Anthony Park Community District Plan
- Merriam Park Master Plan
- Central Corridor Development Strategy
- Raymond Station Area Plan
- Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan
- Mississippi River Corridor Plan
- West Midway Task Force

A. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the Saint Anthony Park Community Council District Plan

Land Use 4. Study potential locations to rezone around commercial and industrial areas to establish a gradual transition between land uses and building forms to assure compatibility of adjacent land uses and densities. Goal is to buffer single-family uses with more appropriate uses (multi-family) near commercial and industrial areas.

The Meridian Industrial Center is not an appropriate buffer between the single-family homes to the south and the transit-oriented development (TOD) to the north.

Design Standards. Institute commercial mixed-use design standards that reinforce human-scale buildings, promote sustainable design, promote quality in exterior materials and construction, reinforce a pedestrian oriented streetscape, promote green design, manage storm water retention, reduce impervious surfaces and visually screen surface parking.

The building's setback does not facilitate a pedestrian-oriented streetscape; neither does fencing. The building's entrance should be immediately off the curb and the façade should incorporate the historic nature of both the Desnoyer Park neighborhood and the Raymond/University historic zone.

9. Conduct zoning study as part of the Raymond area station planning to evaluate rezoning the University-Raymond TOD district to TN districts to achieve standards and design that respect the area's historic quality, enhance its pedestrian accessibility, and encourage increased transit use.

The area was part of the Central Corridor overlay district, but 650 Pelham remained I1. This zoning allows the site, although it is in both the Area of Change for the Raymond Station and specified as a major site for redevelopment corridor-wide, with few restrictions.

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Streetscape Enhancement Plan. Develop and implement a long-term streetscape plan to achieve the economic development, livability, identity and transportation goals of the community.

The Meridian Industrial Center, as is, sets a minimal standard of development for the area. This project will facilitate other developments along Pelham and in the corridor to build to the developer's needs and not to the potential of the corridor. This project is underutilizing the site and scoffing hundreds of people's time and work visioning the future of the corridor.

10. Evaluate opportunities to create parkways with emphasis on trees, interconnections with parks, bike lanes and boulevard plantings where possible. Parkway should create new transportation and pedestrian connections, calm traffic, and create neighborhood identity.

The Wabash Commons, open space proposed for just north of the site, requires a better transitional building between the Desnoyer neighborhood and the open space. Pedestrians travel along Pelham for work, play, shopping, and transportation. Pelham is a corridor that connects CCLRT to Union Park's westernmost neighborhood, and being the only north-south connection to University Avenue between the Mississippi River and Cretin Ave, Pelham Blvd is essentially, and naturally, both a transportation and pedestrian connection that needs to be enhanced.

Pelham also serves as the route for the Midtown Greenway and Grand Rounds and is a current bicycle route for many traveling by alternate means of transportation. The Meridian Industrial Center needs to better emphasize its location on the bike route and encourage more bike travel to and along Pelham. The Central Corridor Bike Walk Action Plan identifies Pelham as a current regional route and the main bike connection from the south to the Raymond Station.

11. Create gateways of architectural and landscape significance to announce entry into the neighborhood.

The St. Anthony Park Community Council's top priority for a new parkway is Raymond Avenue. This would include a realigned Raymond Avenue south of University to connect with Pelham Boulevard just north of Interstate 94.

The St Anthony Park community plans to realign a better connection between Pelham and Raymond, a development that will significantly improve Pelham Avenue and require better streetscape and transition into the station. The Meridian Industrial Center is proposed at a unique location, with a prominent neighborhood immediately south and a vibrant urban village just blocks north. The development should transition between the two, facilitating a sense of space and encourage pedestrian travel and an urban, not suburban design.

26. All new commercial and industrial developments requiring site plan approval should generally be designed to have at least the main entrance facade oriented to the street with access for pedestrians and bicyclists taking priority over vehicular access.

As communicated clearly to the developers, the communities surrounding the site want to have development. It has also been clearly communicated that any development needs to hold the corner at Pelham and Wabash.

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B. The Meridian Industrial Center does not conform to standards in the Merriam Park Master Plan (adopted by the City Council as an Addendum to the City of Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan 4 Feb 2004)

The intent of the Merriam Park Master plan was to continue to develop the Merriam Park neighborhood into an urban village. Strong single-family homes and engaged neighbors helped to create a plan that would better reflect and guide the future of the area.

2. Major new development should be mixed-use and located along transit routes or on underused or inappropriately developed sites

The Meridian Industrial Center does not follow these guidelines, set forth to better facilitate the transition close to residential neighborhoods.

15. Merriam Park should be a friendly, encouraging place for small to medium-sized businesses to grow. Expansion of existing businesses will be favored over the establishment of new businesses, particularly those that would have a negative impact on the community because of congestion, character, or use.

The expansion of local business to the site should have priority.

21. This plan supports the St. Paul Land Use Plan's definition of green spaces, parks, and the river as urban amenities. Green spaces and corridors should be encouraged in the community wherever possible, such as along railroad tracks and roads.

The Merriam Park Master Plan encourages green space along rail tracks, and this site has excellent potential with its location situated between a current neighborhood and proposed green space at Wabash Commons.

24. The community supports initiatives that promote biking, biking, and other means of transportation as alternatives to single-occupant vehicles. Bike lanes, and bikes racks in commercial areas and on buses should be added. Connecting St. Paul to the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis is supported when feasible.

The developer needs to acknowledge and incorporate the future Midtown Greenway and Grand Rounds and the intrinsic connection this site has to that project.

The Site Plan does not conform to expectations of the Desnoyer neighborhood.

The Desnoyer Park Improvement Association believes that the project design is not keeping with its urban neighborhood, and may sit empty without tenants after construction. It is not a long-term development, but merely a hasty development that is not reflective of the neighborhood's needs. The land is immediately across a walking bridge from homes and the fact that it is so close to a main artery of the Central Corridor requires more thought and community input. A UPDC community meeting residents spoke to their concerns for the project, which were not addressed and remain.

C. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the Central Corridor Development Strategy (adopted by City Council in 2007)

Outlining how the Central Corridor should be developed, the CC Development Strategy describes the vision and a set of strategies for how the Central Corridor should grow and change in response to the investment in LRT. The six principles in the strategy, guiding the preparation of plans for each of the transit station areas, are:

- *Reposition Saint Paul in the region.*
- *Benefit and strengthen the diverse community along the Central Corridor.*
- *Link and foster economic activity.*
- *Improve people's mobility throughout their community.*
- *Improve the image and quality of life along the Central Corridor.*
- *Collaborate from design to operation.*

The Meridian Industrial project does not incorporate place making features that will strengthen the community along CCLRT.

3.2 Site has been identified as a Major Opportunity for Development within the area of change. There is heightened potential for the future development at the site.

3.3 Towards a Transit-Supportive Corridor Making Development "Fit"

- *Design new development to provide a transition in scale and ensure it fits into its surroundings, improves existing street conditions, and integrates well with existing neighborhoods and communities.*
- *Achieve minimum ground level floor-to-ceiling heights of 13' along major streets such as the Avenue and at important intersections.*
- *Fill gaps in the street with new buildings or by grouping buildings to create walkable clusters of activity that will animate the public realm.*

The Meridian project does not fit with the surrounding buildings; Pelham has a variety of uses, and many building are built up to the curb. Also, none of the surrounding neighborhoods approve this development as one that will better the community, but rather set a sub-par standard of development for the area.

Transit-Supportive Land Uses & Densities

- *Promote a mix of transit-supportive uses, such as medium-to-high density residential, small-format retail, restaurants and institutions.*
- *Provide a range of housing types and sizes that will cater to both new and existing members of the community.*
- *Animate the street by positioning entrances to individual units at grade and by locating active uses such as restaurants and retail on the ground floor.*

There needs to be an active connection to Pelham, and attractive first floor tenants.

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Transit-Supportive Access, Circulation & Parking

- *Locate parking so that it does not detract from the image of the area by placing it internal to the block, within parking ramps, inside buildings or below ground.*
- *Seek opportunities to consolidate parking, access and servicing.*
- *Seek to develop balanced and coordinated networks of movement that allow for a mix of pedestrian, bicycle, LRT, bus, and vehicular circulation.*

The parking for the current project detracts from the design of the building and draws attention away from the street. There is no consolidation of parking and a lack of focus on CCLRT transportation, biking and walking.

A Green, Attractive & Connected Pedestrian Environment

- *Design open spaces as a focus for new development and work towards improving pedestrian amenities along the Corridor, especially adjacent to stations.*
- *Extend existing streets, open spaces and open space linkages to strengthen connections with the surrounding community*

There needs to be planned connectivity to the future Wabash Commons.

In addition, the outlined Market Potential of the Station Area outlines that by 2030 there will be no industrial in the Raymond station area. This proposed project would far outlast that projection if built, deviating from the desired use at the station area. (Image attached)

D. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the Raymond Station Area Plan

The Raymond area is historically St. Paul's largest industrial district. The properties are typically one to seven-story brick and stone structures that originally housed factories, warehouses, offices, and commercial spaces.

2.3 Defining the Study Area

The Raymond Station Area has potential to evolve as a place with more employment, a greater range of businesses, more vibrant neighborhoods, and new and enhanced beautiful public spaces. The station area plan process used four mapping layers to investigate and understand the Raymond Station Area. The station area boundary extends east of the ¼ mile zone to capture larger potential development parcels located along Vandalia, and farther west and south to include a number of underutilized, sites with excellent access and frontage relative to Highway 280 and Interstate 94. This boundary is the primary focus for all recommendations contained within this document.

Within the boundary, a refined Area of Change has been delineated through the station area planning process. The Area of Change denotes the parcels where change is welcome and should be encouraged, whether through gradual infill, intensification or comprehensive redevelopment.

2.4 Looking Ahead – the Raymond Station Area in 2030

Looking Ahead describes a community-crafted vision for the future of the Raymond Station Area. This narrative generally describes the sum of desired characteristics for this community, and its future role within the broader Central Corridor. The Raymond Station Area will successfully accommodate new forms of residential and commercial infill, while preserving and strengthening both the historic character of the area and the integrity of its employment uses. The potential for a new employment district is identified adjacent to the confluence of Highway 280 and Interstate 94, where excellent access and visibility create a strong economic development opportunity. New development within the Station Area will reflect the architectural scale and character of existing historic buildings, to strengthen this emerging urban village.

Raymond Station Area Vision:

A model mixed-use urban village that successfully combines new and old: buildings, streets, land uses, and modes of transportation. This Station Area will evolve with an authenticity and sense of place that distinguishes it within the Corridor, and becomes a must-see district for visitors seeking to discover the places that make Saint Paul unique.

FIGURE 3.3 - Wabash Commons is a focal point for the larger bicycle and pedestrian movement network and the new redevelopment parcels surrounding it.

Wabash Commons: A significant public space is proposed along the north side of Wabash to create a focal point for a future employment hub south of the Avenue. Similar to its proposed sister 'Commons' in the Westgate Station Area, the Wabash Commons is intended to be a high-quality space, enhancing the place making and real estate value for adjacent office and employment uses. Its size will support both active and passive uses.

- *Wabash Commons, Myrtle Hinge, Top of the Village Park and Charles Street park network offer opportunities to explore and illuminate the history and promise of the Raymond Area through interactive installations and interpretive walkways.*
- *Pelham University Gateway: a left over space, offers opportunity to mark and celebrate the entrance to the Raymond Station Area. While public art opportunities are broadly available to national and even international artists, special efforts should be made to engage local artists.*

In this burgeoning arts district, there are opportunities for private property owners to engage artists as they envision their overall developments and holdings and to commission public art, particularly where private property intersects the public right-of-way.

Future investment in Raymond's Station Area must build on and strengthen the qualities of the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. Preserving the integrity and character of the area's defining architectural history will be vital to the continued success of land use and development in the Raymond Station Area. Nothing in this plan should be deemed to contradict

the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District Design Review Guidelines, but should instead reinforce, and be read in conjunction with, this important legislative document. Also, important to the long term economic and social health of the area is the preservation of viable employment uses with a long term economic future, while continuing to promote new and diverse residential and employment uses that are transit-supportive. The Raymond Station Area requires a flexible and permissive land use strategy that emphasizes connectivity, design performance and transit-supportive qualities, including a broad mix of uses, flexibility of regulation over time, active first level uses, and shared parking solutions. Together, these approaches will assist to strengthen and repair the area's "Main Street" quality, and reinforce the fabric of the area as a complete community with housing, employment and movement options for all.

While this overall direction will help guide change over the entire Raymond Station Area, this section describes four distinct Character Areas that will require specific policy direction to achieve their built form and land use potential over time. The following Character Areas descriptions and policy directions provide clear guidance to the forms of development and investment that will support the future of the broader station area.

4.1 Raymond Historic Village

The Raymond Historic Village will be a model of a vibrant commercial corridor that supports people living and working in a revitalized historic district. The University-Raymond Commercial Historic District, designated by the Saint Paul City Council in 2005, developed in the early 20th century (1891-1941) as the city's largest industrial area and a national transportation center. Nearly all of the properties in the district are related to some aspect of the activities of the Minnesota Transfer Railway, or the early years of the trucking industry. The district's 22 contributing buildings, most of them with high exterior integrity, reflect the evolution of the area from the railroad era to the interstate highway system era. A set of design review guidelines was adopted by the City Council when the district was designated. They are used by the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) to review permits for rehabilitation, restoration, new construction and demolition. The guidelines address masonry and walls, windows and doors, signs and accessories, new construction, non-contributing and contemporary buildings, and demolition. Any proposed development within the historic district boundaries will need to comply with the HPC's guidelines, as well as the key moves and policy directions in the Raymond Station Area Plan. The adaptive re-use of existing historic and employment buildings, and the sensitive construction of infill uses, will combine a range of residential, commercial, employment and cultural uses while maintaining and strengthening the scale and character of the existing village. Pedestrian-scaled streets will connect the main spine of the Avenue north and south to a wealth of employment anchors and stable residential communities. The LRT platform will effectively extend the village qualities of the Avenue east to Carleton. Though the Raymond village is primarily focused along University Avenue, larger full-block development parcels will exhibit a relationship and secondary orientation to inner blocks where employment uses are located.

4.1.1 Built Form-New development should fit with its surroundings.

a) New development along University Avenue should be 2 to 6 residential stories in height with transitions that respect the existing scale and character of the historic buildings along the street. The northeast corner exhibits potential for taller building heights, and could reach 6-8 stories if setback from the intersection on a 3-4 story podium-type building.

b) New development should ensure that buildings have strong street presence along University, Charles and Myrtle. Buildings along Myrtle and Charles may step down to two stories.

c) New development should be sited to ensure an adequate public realm and pedestrian promenade.

d) New buildings on corner sites should front both streets and utilize their corner positioning as a distinctive feature in their design similar to the Specialty Building.

e) Building design should incorporate materials and an architectural style that is distinguishable as contemporary, yet compatible with adjacent historic buildings through scale, rhythm, color and materials, while meeting the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines. All new development should promote transparency and activity at street level.

f) First floor commercial or retail uses should help to animate the street by incorporating large glass frontages that allow the activity within to be seen from the street and have at least one entrance that is oriented towards Raymond or University Avenue, access points to the station platforms, and/or key gathering places.

g) Commercial or retail uses should be located in the first floor of all buildings within the Priority Active Frontage zones identified on page 25.

4.1.2 Land Use & Development Pattern

Urban Infill along the Avenue should have many uses.

a) A broad mix of uses should be concentrated along the edges of the Avenue where they provide an easy connection to public transit, and benefit from the visibility and profile of being located on a major transportation corridor.

b) Live-work units may be permitted on the first floor of all buildings beyond the Priority Active Frontage areas. All new private development must contribute to adjacent streetscape improvements.

g) As development occurs, seek opportunities to increase north/south mid block connections such as the one created at Carleton Lofts.

h) All streets should provide sidewalks, adequate lighting and streetscape amenity.

The University-Raymond Commercial Historic District outlined above is comprised of numerous contributing buildings, many of which are 1-2 stories in height. New development should respect the scale and character of the existing buildings while filling in the gaps to intensify the district...

4.2 A Prestige Employment District

The accessibility and centrality ... [and] highly visible and accessible frontage would be ideal for a linear corporate campus for large corporate office buildings or a series of multi-tenanted research park, laboratory and office buildings. These attributes may also make the area attractive for a new hotel and conference center catering to downtown Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the University of Minnesota, and/or the general Twin Cities Region market...

4.2.1 Built Form

c) Further east and toward the center of the Station Area, buildings should step down to a maximum height of 6-8 stories around the proposed Wabash Commons.

d) Full-block, large floorplate commercial developments should be permitted.

e) New development should exhibit a strong relationship to both the Cromwell frontage and Wabash Commons to ensure there are no backlotting conditions on either of these important spaces. Commercial uses should be principally oriented towards Cromwell Avenue. Buildings adjacent to the Commons should have direct access to it.

Building density and size at the site should reflect the potential of the corridor and the possibility of higher job density.

4.5 Managed Parking Strategies... To properly assess and manage Park & Ride and Hide & Ride, comprehensive strategies must be implemented so that remaining on- and off-street parking can best serve residents and businesses in the corridor, and support walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods. Clearly, the reliance on surface parking at current development standards is a large contributor to the underutilization of land within the Station Area. A transformation from surface parking to structured and underground parking will need to happen over time and in conjunction with new development. The following policies provide the direction to facilitate this transformation that will be critical to the creation of active and vibrant streets within the Raymond Station Area. There is a huge possibility that there will be park&hide activity with the too-large and under utilized parking lot planned for the Meridian Industrial Center.

a) The establishment of new single-use surface parking lots on University Avenue, and the expansion of existing lots within the station areas, should be discouraged.

b) Major redevelopment sites should be explored for opportunities to create shared, structured or below grade parking.

c) Where surface parking occurs along University Avenue this should occur to the side or behind buildings and be limited to a maximum of 60-feet in width (for the provision of 2 parking aisles and one drive aisle) and should utilize landscape buffers to minimize the impact on the pedestrian environment.

d) Parking requirements should be reduced or eliminated to reduce development costs, support transit ridership and open new possibilities for flexible live-work spaces on smaller sites where on-site parking is not available.

There should be the least amount possible of new parking created along the CCLRT, especially in the station areas and area of change. Two hundred spaces of parking for the proposed building is superfluous.

5.1 Connections

The goal of this section is to identify improved movement options for pedestrians, transit riders and cyclists in reaching the Raymond Station Area from adjacent neighborhoods and the broader Corridor. The Connections diagram (Figure 5.1) identifies key routes to and within the Raymond Station Area, and illustrates recommendations for improving the connectivity, safety, efficiency and quality of these routes for pedestrians and cyclists, including...Midtown Greenway Connection- The long-term feasibility of reconciling grade difference between Pelham Boulevard and the future Midtown Greenway bike route should be explored.

Both Pelham and Wabash are identified in the plan as bike routes. This position and the need for connectivity to the Raymond Station is echoed in the Central Corridor Bike Walk Action Plan. Explicit attention to the Greenway development and connectivity on Pelham is needed to facilitate reflective development along the routes.

E. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the City of St Paul Comprehensive Plan

Implementation

[The plan aims to] capitalize on the potential of the Central Corridor. The construction of light rail transit in the Central Corridor provides opportunities for the city to realize its potential as a complex, sophisticated urban center with denser housing and employment centers.... Cultural and historic resources enhance the lives of Saint Paul residents and visitors by defining the character of the city and creating a strong link to its rich past. Protecting these resources through the use of historic preservation tools will minimize such threats as lack of maintenance, development pressures, and challenges to finding appropriate uses for contemporary times.

Land Use

[This is a] Mixed-Use Corridor. This land use consists primary of thoroughfares through the city that are served by public transit (or could be in the future). Mixed-Use Corridors include areas where two or more of the following uses are or could be located: residential, commercial, retail, office, small scale industry, institutional, and open space uses. The uses in these corridors may be

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within a building or in buildings that are in close proximity to each other. Mixed-Use Corridors includes Neighborhood Centers, which are compact, mixed-use areas of higher density housing, as well as shopping, community amenities, and employment centers. The Central Corridor, one specific Mixed-Use Corridor, is the major transit corridor connecting Saint Paul with the University of Minnesota and Downtown Minneapolis..

Provide Land for Jobs - For Saint Paul to have a strong economy and to thrive, it must have businesses with living wage jobs. The strategy focuses on providing land for employment centers that capitalize on Saint Paul's historic strengths and emerging labor markets...

Promote Aesthetics and Development Standards - As Saint Paul continues to revitalize itself and to grow, it must be an attractive place to live, work, and visit. This strategy provides a framework for design and aesthetics that will engage people and help integrate the built environment into the community.

2.1 Ensure the availability of sufficient quantities of land suitable for existing and new employment centers; prepare an inventory of properties zoned for industrial and commercial uses that have the potential for redevelopment as employment centers.

An inventory of vacant and underutilized buildings and land currently zoned for industrial and commercial use will provide the City and its development partners with baseline information necessary to pursue a program to develop employment centers.

2.2 Promote the redevelopment of outmoded and non-productive sites and buildings so they can sustain existing industries and attract emerging

Land Use section of the City of St Paul Comprehensive Plan

2.3 Attract industries that use best management practices regarding environmental issues (e.g., air and water quality, soil contamination, solid waste, sustainable construction practices, etc.) in their site

We would like to see state of that art development at the site, especially due to its identified potential for redevelopment.

2.15 Redevelop underutilized or vacant land in railroad corridors. There has been significant redevelopment in the Phalen Corridor and the Great Northern Corridor in the last two decades. Ample acreage is available for light industry, commercial office development, and capitalization on the growth of freight rail.

*2.16 Prepare a study of the West Midway industrial area outside the line of change as identified in the **Central Corridor Development Strategy** to determine how the industrial area may be best used to strengthen Saint Paul's industrial sector and employment base (see Figure LU-G).*

The West Midway, one of Saint Paul's historic railroad corridors, is strategically located, with much of its current business activity closely tied to the railroad lines that run through it. Many existing businesses, though successful, do not employ large numbers of people. The study, in part, will focus on how the West Midway can evolve to capture "knowledge-based" business activity and to take advantage of the potential for a jobs/housing match because of its proximity to the Central Corridor.

Land Assembly 2.23 Establish site plan review standards for the I1, I2, and I3 districts for the purposes of providing for the efficient use of land and enhancing the aesthetic quality of the district. TN development standards incorporated into the IR district enhance the appearance and functionality of an industrial development so the district is compatible with nearby commercial and residential areas. Efficient use of a parcel will yield greater numbers of jobs for each acre of development than inefficient use.

More than 68 jobs should be required for the site, especially due to its proximity to the CCLRT and residential areas.

3.2 Prepare design standards that provide a transition between single-family houses and nearby taller buildings. Issues that the design standards should address include, but are not limited to, height, mass, scale, and architectural context. Taller buildings might be located in Neighborhood Centers or Mixed-Use Corridors, at the edges where they abut single-family neighborhoods. This passage clearly identifies what the UPDC is seeking for this project.

3.6 Encourage improvement of safety through design, as outlined in Design for Public Safety. Design for Public Safety incorporates the principles of crime prevention through environmental design, to focus on strategies and techniques for the design of the physical environment, both of sites and buildings, which help reduce opportunities for crime (see Policy PR-1.7).

Transit-Oriented Development and Pedestrian-Oriented development can be synonymous.

3.15 Support the development of guidelines to incorporate public art in City financed capital projects and larger redevelopment efforts to imbue these projects with a distinct sense of place; provide for their maintenance. Projects include infrastructure, buildings, and landscape and exclude projects that are below ground. The City should involve artists early in the planning and design of capital projects.

The Port Authority's involvement in this project should encourage the incorporation of public art or artistic elements.

3.16 Facilitate collaboration between artists and the community to identify opportunities for public art and to discuss civic issues that may inform the artist's work.

St Anthony has been identified as a Neighborhood Center by the City of St Paul.

1.11 Neighborhood Centers evolved as Saint Paul grew through the years. They all have an existing development pattern conducive to supporting a denser, mixed-use, pedestrian environment where commerce, employment, and amenities can be efficiently and effectively provided. Existing Neighborhood Centers are not all developed at the same level of intensity. Moreover, some existing Neighborhood Centers, such as Saint Anthony, are expected to have modest growth...

1.12 Balance the following objectives for Neighborhood Centers through the density and scale of development: accommodating growth, supporting transit use and walking, providing a range of housing types, providing housing at densities that support transit, and providing open space and recreational opportunities. There can be gradations of density within individual Neighborhood Centers, with denser developments at the core and less dense developments at the periphery.

1.13 Establish boundaries for Neighborhood Centers that reflect existing development patterns and functional characteristics of the area. The City should use these boundaries to guide development activity, monitor growth and other development conditions, and evaluate performance toward meeting objectives for services and community amenities.

1.14 Plan for growth in Neighborhood Centers. The City should recognize community circumstances and preferences as stated in City adopted summaries of small area plans and district plans, while still providing additional housing opportunities at densities that support transit and walking.

As outlined above, the City should acknowledge the planning documents for the area and ensure that the intent of those plans be enacted.

1.15 Promote Neighborhood Centers as compact, mixed-use communities that provide services and employment close to residences. Mixed-use development combines three or more uses (e.g., residential, retail, office, recreation, etc.) into an integrated, pedestrian oriented real estate project that is served by transit. Whether the components of the project are within a building or in buildings that are in close proximity to each other, they are functionally integrated so that use of space is maximized. Some of the benefits of mixed-use are activating urban areas during more hours of the day, increasing housing options, reducing auto dependence, and creating a sense of place.

1.18 Provide connections for bicycles and pedestrians to community facilities (e.g., parks, recreation centers, libraries, etc.) and to activities that support the residential population; and to adjacent areas of the city.

Pelham Boulevard is a direct route to Desnoyer Park, Mississippi River and the Town and Country Club.

1.27 Provide connections by bicycle and pedestrian facilities to adjacent areas.

Historic Preservation section of the St Paul Comprehensive Plan

Neighborhood Character

6.1. Determine the character-defining features of each neighborhood that should be preserved; incorporate these features into area plans and master plans for new development.

New development at 650 Pelham should be based on the historic Desnoyer Park neighborhood and the Raymond/University historic district.

6.5. Encourage City-funded projects to protect and enhance those neighborhood physical features that define an area's visual character and urban form.

Pelham Blvd has the potential to be an unprecedented development that enhances the aesthetics of all surrounding neighborhoods. By facilitating a development that transitions between the industrial nature of the area into a mixed-use corridor and residential border, the site can maximize its full potential.

Transportation

2.2 Support transit-oriented design through zoning and design guidelines. Compact, street-oriented design should be emphasized to promote walkability and transit use, especially in commercial corridors. Standards for building placement and design based primarily on the needs of the pedestrian should be enforced and expanded.

As referenced above, the design and placement of any building at 650 Pelham should be pedestrian focused and promote transit use.

2.6 c. Create better north-south connections to the Central Corridor and realign or extend existing routes where appropriate.

Pelham is the main north-south connection to the CCLRT for Desnoyer Park residents.

2.12 Simplify and reduce off-street parking requirements and use definitions. To promote investment in existing and historic commercial buildings, the use of a baseline exemption should be explored, where buildings with smaller footprints are not required to provide parking. New off-street parking should be further reduced and restricted in close proximity to transit lines and in Downtown to support transit rider-ship.

F. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the Mississippi River Corridor Plan

Objective 6.3 in the Mississippi River Corridor Plan identified the priority to provide safe pedestrian and bike connections from surrounding neighborhoods to the corridor and to support the development and access to greater regional systems, such as the Greenway.

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Pelham is a direct connection to the Mississippi River Blvd and the Mississippi River Corridor between St Anthony Park and Desnoyer Park. Development along Pelham should reflect the requirements set forth to enhance and promote the River Corridor.

G. The Site Plan does not conform to standards incorporated in the West Midway Study recommendations.

- Surface parking shall not be located within 30 feet of the corner
- Buildings shall be located to emphasize and 'anchor' the corner
- Permit 25 spaces of required parking
- Maximum set back of 15 feet from lot line
- One shade tree per five parking spaces
- Buildings shall hold the corner and shall be oriented to the corner of both public streets.

The above West Midway Task Force standards clearly identify fundamental requirements for the site that are clearly not met in the current site plan.

2. The City of St Paul Municipal Code 63 outlines standards for building.

The City of St Paul Municipal Code 63.110, requires buildings to hold the corners, or be built up to encourage access along both side of the property when at an intersection. The site plan as approved does not hold the corner, but is set back and surrounded by parking.

3. There was no Community Design Process to resolve concerns with the project.

UPDC staff recognized the issues community members and the Union Park Land Use Committee were having with the project as proposed. At a public meeting, UPDC staff requested that there be a Community Design Process for the site to facilitate needed input from the community. With the extreme objections as evidenced in letters, public meetings, and communication with the developers from the communities, the site plan should not be approved based on the simple truth that the surrounding neighborhoods, using evidence from their community and city plans, do not believe that this project is the best development for the site. As a result of the approval of the site plan, all of the work that residents, city staff, consultants, and elected officials have undergone through the adoption of planning documents would be disregarded.

The site is one of unique interest for all parties. Located within a quarter-mile and 5-minute walk to the Raymond Station, and a billion dollar historic development of CCLRT, the community is using its only option, our planning documents, to guide a better development for the site. UPDC only wants to ensure that TOD and community standards are adhered to so that this will be a positive first development in this historic time.

4. Zoning is not TN at the site

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The I-1 zoning that is currently in effect is not in the best interest of the site, community, or central corridor. It may be considered spot zoning (or even “reverse spot zoning”) that the site was not rezoned to TN during the Central Corridor Overlay Zoning District process and planned to be improved into a mixed-use development through the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The site plan, if developed as is, would embody a minimal building that mirrors suburban style-development, instead of the urban village precedent the communities surrounding it are trying to establish.

Given that immediately north of the site has been zoned TN and that the neighborhood immediately south single-family home, and as it is on a north-south corridor of access for the Raymond Station and the CCLRT line, industrial zoning does not fit with the intent of all planning documents currently in effect for the site.

In fact, the project is yet speculative, as the developer has identified no tenants. UPDC considers the approval of site plan for this project to be completely inappropriate, in that it would effectively create a sub-standard precedent for development in the area, allow city-adopted planning documents to be disregarded and uninformed development to proceed, and facilitate a precedent for developer-oriented spot zoning, which is extremely disconcerting for a site that has been identified by the City of St. Paul as a major site for redevelopment in accordance to the CCLRT project.

Conclusions

Failure of the City of St. Paul to designate the site as a Traditional Neighborhood zone was disappointing for the surrounding neighborhoods and a concerning harbinger for the future development of the area. Absent the TN designation, this site plan falls far short of the spirit of the plans for the area and the basic needs of the neighborhood.

In light of this, we respectfully, but urgently request that the project and attendant site plan include the following conditions in conformance with the spirit and intent of any development of the site as envisioned in the St. Anthony Park Community Plan, Merriam Park Master Plan, Raymond Station Area Plan, Mississippi River Corridor Plan, Central Corridor Development Strategy, and City of St. Paul Comprehensive Plan:

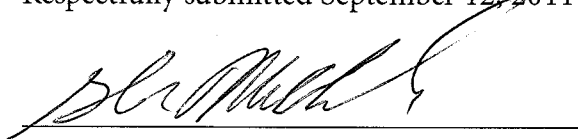
- 1) Buildings should hold the corners at Pelham and Wabash; there should not be more than 15 feet between the sidewalk and any building**
- 2) Buildings should have façade articulation consistent with the historic district at Pelham and University**
- 3) Any parking spaces should be behind the building or underground to reduce impervious pavement and encourage the use of public transportation, especially the CCLRT**
- 4) There should be at least two occupied stories on any building at the site**

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- 5) **Windows adjacent to the streets should be prominent and perpetuate a storefront**
- 6) **Doorways should be located close to street and emphasized architecturally**
- 7) **Incorporate artistic elements reflective of the Creative Enterprise artists**
- 8) **Increased building density**
- 9) **Mixed commercial and industrial use at the site**
- 10) **Design any building at the site to facilitate and encourage the growth and expansion of our local industry and buildings. First opportunity for tenants at the site should be local businesses looking to expand. Confirm tenants for the building prior to construction.**

For all the reasons cited above, the Union Park District Council requests the Saint Paul City Council to reverse the Planning Commission Resolution 11-73 to approve Site Plan 10-906716 for the project at 650 Pelham Boulevard and mandate inclusion of the above stated conditions for the development of this site.

Respectfully submitted September 12, 2011



Glen R. McCluskey
President
Union Park District Council