

city of saint paul
planning commission resolution
file number 24-36
date December 13, 2024

WHEREAS, Macalester College, File # 24-095-842, has applied to rezone from T2 traditional neighborhood to RM1 multiple family (1655 and 1661 Grand Avenue and 37 Macalester Street) and from T2 traditional neighborhood to VP vehicle parking (53, 57, and 63 Macalester Street) under the provisions of § 61.801(b) of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, property located at 1655 and 1661 Grand Avenue and 37 Macalester Street and 53, 57, and 62 Macalester Street, Parcel Identification Number (PINs) 04.28.23.41.0073, 04.28.23.41.0010, 04.28.23.41.0015, and 04.28.23.41.0066, legally described in the file; and

WHEREAS, the Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission, on December 5, 2024, held a public hearing at which all persons present were given an opportunity to be heard pursuant to said application in accordance with the requirements of § 61.303 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Planning Commission, based on the evidence presented to its Zoning Committee at the public hearing, as substantially reflected in the minutes, made the following findings of fact:

1. Macalester College owns the property and is petitioning to rezone three parcels on the north side of Grand Avenue from T2 to RM1. Macalester intends to construct a new campus welcome center and residence hall on this property. A five-story building is proposed. The welcome center on the main level will have a large lobby space to receive visitors and prospective students, office space for admissions staff, and a coffee-type shop at the corner with indoor and outdoor seating that is open to the public. The residence hall will be 4-stories in height above the welcome center and have 224 beds. Macalester submitted a separate but related application for a conditional use permit to expand its campus boundary to the north side of Grand Avenue (ZF #24-095-844). The rezoning petition also includes a request to rezone property on the south side of Grand Avenue at Macalester Street, southwest corner, from T2 to VP. Macalester intends to construct a surface parking lot with about 22 spaces on the corner property. The corner property is currently occupied by three single family structures used for campus administrative offices and student housing. An existing surface parking lot on the north side of Grand Avenue with about 30 spaces serves nearby businesses on the south side of the street. This parking lot will be demolished to make way for the new welcome center and residence hall. Macalester states that maintaining convenient parking for nearby businesses on the south side of Grand Avenue is important for the health of those businesses. Public Works plans to reconstruct Grand Avenue in spring/summer of 2025. Macalester would like to have its development plans approved by spring 2025 so that the infrastructure needs for the new developments,

moved by Taghioff
seconded by _____
in favor Unanimous
against _____

including utility work along Grand Avenue, can occur during street reconstruction so the newly constructed street does not need to be torn up later for the campus developments.

2. The proposed rezonings are consistent with the way this area has developed. Macalester College has been an anchor institution in Saint Paul and the neighborhood for nearly 150 years. The intent of the RM1 residential district is to, among other things, *provide an environment for institutional uses and serve as a zone of transition between less restricted districts and more restricted districts.* The property along the north side of Grand Avenue, which was acquired by the college in 2018, abuts existing campus property to the north that is zoned RM1 and campus property to the east that is zoned H2. The overwhelming majority of the campus is zoned residential; most of the campus is zoned H2, though there are a few areas zoned RM1 and T2. The RM1 zoned areas are at the northern edge of the campus along the south side of Summit Avenue. The proposed zoning is consistent with the RM1 zoning of the campus property immediately to the north of the subject property and serves as a zone of transition between the T2 district to the west and the H2 district to the east. Zoning Code Sec. 65.220 regulates college land uses in residential zoning districts with a conditional use permit. The VP district is *intended to permit the establishment of off-street parking facilities to be used solely for off-street parking of private passenger vehicles as a use incidental to a principal use. The district will serve a use district which has developed without adequate off-street parking.* The commercial district along Grand Avenue developed without adequate off-street parking. The rezoning allows relocation of retail parking from the north side of Grand Avenue at Macalester Street, which will be removed to make way for the new campus welcome center and residence hall, to the south side of Grand Avenue at Macalester Street.
3. The proposed zoning is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The 2040 future land use map guides the property along this stretch of Grand Avenue for mixed-use. While the college is an institutional use, its campus uses proposed for Grand Avenue are mixed-use in nature. The welcome center and residence hall proposed for the north side of the Grand Avenue and the off-street parking facility proposed for the south side of the street are appropriate uses for an area guided for mixed-use. Land use policy LU-1 states, *“Encourage transit supportive density and direct growth to areas with existing or planned transit capacity.”* The residence hall will house up to 224 students and these potential transit riders will help support transit. Macalester discourages all of its students from bringing cars to campus and partners with Metro Transit to provide free bus passes to its entire student body. This stretch of Grand Avenue is served by Metro Transit Route 63. In addition, A Line BRT runs along Snelling Avenue two blocks to the east providing a connection to the Green Line. Policy LU-15 states, *“Ensure that stand-alone parking uses are limited.”* While the proposed parking facility with about 22 spaces will be a stand-alone use, it is a replacement of an existing 30 space parking lot, not a new or expanded use in the area, and is, therefore, limited. Policy LU-27 states, *“Provide for land use change and rezoning of land adjacent to Mixed-Use areas to allow for commercial redevelopment and/or expansion fronting arterial and collector streets.”* While the college itself is an institutional use and a use permitted in a residential district, the proposed campus uses of the properties for a welcome center, residence hall, and surface parking will be mixed-use in nature with active uses at street level and residential uses above and surface parking to serve nearby businesses. Objective H3 in the Macalester-Groveland Community Plan states, *“Recognize and accommodate student-housing needs while respecting the rights and concerns of all community stakeholders ...”* and land use strategy LU1.1 states, *“Maintain and/or establish zoning that encourages higher-density (taller) development at the intersection of mixed-use*

corridors ...". RM1 zoning permits colleges and the high density residential and mixed-use activities that comprise an active campus.

4. The proposed zoning is compatible with surrounding uses. RM1 zoning is compatible with the long established surrounding campus uses immediately to the north, zoned RM1, and to the east, zoned H2. VP zoning is compatible with existing nearby campus and commercial uses. Colleges in residential zoning districts are permitted with a conditional use permit. Macalester College applied for a conditional use permit to expand its campus boundary (ZF #24-095-844); this is separate from, but related to, the rezoning petition.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Planning Commission recommends to the City Council that the application of Macalester College to rezone property at 1655 and 1661 Grand Avenue and 37 Macalester Street from T2 traditional neighborhood to RM1 low-density multiple family residential and to rezone property at 53, 57 and 63 Macalester Street from T2 traditional neighborhood to VP vehicular parking (PINs 04.28.23.41.0073, 04.28.23.41.0010, 04.28.23.41.0015, 04.28.23.41.0066) be approved.