



West 7th / Fort Road Federation

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Saint Paul, MN 55102

651.298.5599

www.FortRoadFederation.org

March 16, 2020

Councilmember Rebecca Noecker
15 Kellogg Blvd.
West 310-B City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Subject: 337 West 7th Street Proposed Apartments

Dear Councilmember Noecker,

On Monday, March 9, 2020, the West 7th Street / Fort Road Federation (Planning District Council 9) Board heard revised plans by developers and the architect of proposed apartments at 337 West 7th Street: Northland Real Estate Group, Ackerberg Group, and DJR Architecture.

Some of these changes were brought about because the geo-technical report came back and they couldn't handle stormwater treatment under the building as well because of the high bedrock. A summary of what the Board learned follows:

1. The goal is to still have the same type of renters, namely hospital nurses and support staff, government employees, service industry workers, so the pricing of units should stay about the same as under the first proposal.
2. The building will only have one floor of parking instead of two, but it will have about 16 more stalls because they'll use a semi-automated parking stacker. Retail and ADA stalls will be regular stalls that will not be stacked. New total is approximately 110 stalls.
3. The building will be setback 8' on both side yards to make space for stormwater treatment.
4. Instead of 5 floors of apartments, now 6 floors are planned, which results in approximately 190 units: primarily studios of 380-500 square feet, though also one and two-bedrooms.
5. To keep costs low and construction brief, the units will be largely constructed off-site, then assembled and finished on-site.
6. The facade may be more "playful," but that's not finalized yet. The Board did not see images of this concept.
7. Though the building would still be 7 floors, but it would be above 75' tall, closer to 81' tall.

The Fort Road Federation coordinates participation in advocacy and planning and builds community connections for the residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations of the West 7th neighborhood so that it is a place where people want to live, work, and play.

8. The first floor, facing West 7th Street, would still be a retail space, though smaller at around 1,800 square feet.

The Board discussed how important it was that these apartments be affordable to people who work and live near West 7th. The developers reiterated that they will come back to the Federation as the facade concepts are developed or if other changes are sought.

The Board voted to support the request by Northland Real Estate Group, Ackerberg Group, and DJR Architecture for proposed apartments and retail site at 337 West 7th Street:

- Conditional Use Permit allowing up to 85' (previously for 75')
- Variance on parking, will have 110+/- stalls, about 190+/- units (previously 94 stalls, 153 units)
- Variance for Floor Area Ratio (previously granted, but now numbers would be different)

Board Member and Planning Commissioner, Wendy Underwood, abstained from voting.

If you have any questions, please call or email me at 651.298.5599 or emily@fortroadfederation.org.

Sincerely,

Emily Northey

Emily Northey
Executive Director and Community Organizer

CC: Brian Farrell, Northland Real Estate Group
Michael S. Margulies, Northland Real Estate Group
Aron Johnson, DJR Architecture
Mike Munson, Ackerberg Group
Tom Bonfe, Owner of Bonfe's
Anton Jerve, City of Saint Paul Dept. of PED
Debbie Crippen, City of Saint Paul, DSI

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a resident of [82 Leech Street](#) and am writing with my strong support for the pending application for a conditional use permit to build a 7-story apartment building with retail space at 337 West 7th Street in Saint Paul. Given our proximity to downtown as well as several large commercial, health care and even a 15-story residential building one block East, I find the proposed 85 ft height to be consistent with neighboring uses. Adding residential density is befitting for West 7th, a major commercial corridor approaching downtown Saint Paul. Frankly, increasing residential density is also much needed to support existing retail and restaurants in our neighborhood. The project's neighborhood retail space also complements recent small business growth on that block of Leech Street with the opening of Scout Trading Company, Hope Breakfast Bar, and Café Astoria. I've personally enjoyed seeing those underutilized spaces be transformed into vibrant places for Saint Paul residents and visitors to gather. I look forward to the proposed project similarly transforming the vacant lot on Smith Ave. While I wish the proposed development had more 2+ bedroom units to accommodate families and fewer microapartments (who would ever pay that much for so little square footage?), I am overall supportive of building more housing units in our community. More rental units at any price point helps address the City's affordable housing crisis long term.

While parking on West 7th can be a challenge during events at the Xcel Energy Center and during peak shift times at the nearby Children's and United Hospitals, I am also supportive of the parking variance request. MetroTransit already runs frequent bus services between West 7th and downtown, connecting residents to the major public transportation hubs that span the Twin Cities. Our residents who are worried about traffic congestion in the "big city" are welcome to move to the Twin Cities' neighboring suburbs where they will find ample parking in their private driveways and can drive to grocery stores, restaurants and spacious parks in the comfort of their own vehicle. Meanwhile, I'll enjoy walking down West 7th, waving at my new neighbors and stopping at Claddaugh or Café Astoria for a cup of coffee.

Sincerely,

Kate Cunningham

[82 Leech Street](#)

Dear Committee:

The variances to the Zoning code, as requested by the Developers of the site referenced above, concern me, as a resident of the adjacent Historic Irvine Park neighborhood. My concerns are three-fold: (1) The overall impact of "up-zoning" by virtue of Conditional Use Permits; (2) Height and scale of the building; (3) Parking variance impact on an already stressed parking area.

(1) My background is as an affordable housing developer for more than 30 years. I am not opposed to the small units, nor specifically to the density of the development. But there are community effects of the requested variances that I fear, not from a Build-Absolutely-Nothing-Anywhere-Near-Anybody, but the uniqueness of this site and surrounding community. The specific variances requested would hardly be needed, if this site were truly part of the Central Business District. But it is not, and the zoning restrictions exist (as I have come to believe in my 44 years of paying attention to this area's precarious position) to distinguish this (West Seventh and Irvine Park) as a "neighborhood" and not as part of the CBD.

As we observe the several developments occurring on the west end of downtown, the downtown/neighborhood line is indeed blurring. If there is to be a coordinated, formal decision to amend where the CBD ends, I would like to see a serious discussion of where that line is most appropriate to land. I would like to see that discussion reflect not only sensitivity to the genuine, designated historic buildings of the area, but also to the unfortunate forces of the past that threatened those very buildings. That discussion ought also to include the impact of the United/Children's Hospital complex, and its impact on the community. It needs to take into account an already-stressed traffic and parking situation on West 7th that threatens not only convenience but safety, and is most severely stressed during Excel Center events.

Do not these various factors beg for an update of the Plan for this area, or an update to a Small Area Plan? I am not aware of the formal criteria for a Small Area Plan, but clearly the developments of the past several years have so changed this area that the nature of future development prospects and what the City, in its wisdom, should be encouraging or even allowing ought to be reconsidered. Such a plan would allow a serious consideration of the scale of ANY buildings (and when variances in THIS area might make sense), as well as impacts on traffic, congestion and the impact on the existing and fragile residential communities.

We have all watched as commercial interests become more significant in areas that have previously been residential. As a community near downtown, residents of this area have been keenly aware of "progress" and competing uses for scarce land. This specific area has been vulnerable to these forces since the 1850's, and narrowly escaped being dwarfed by larger scale development in the 1970's, plans which would have demolished a number of important historic, pioneer buildings. What is different now and in this specific area is that the residences we are discussing are not derelict. They have been lovingly preserved/restored. But they are still vulnerable. It's why we pay attention and

why we care, and why we would like to see this issue addressed in a deliberate, thoughtful way--and not through piecemeal variances.

(2) Although we understand the dynamic of the affordability of the units (which we support), the number of units and therefore the height, we nevertheless much prefer to see the height limit as established by the existing zoning upheld. We accept there is a trade-off and regret that it is difficult to "have it all" on this site. But the encroachment of a building of this size overall, exceeding the height limits, creates a building of a scale that is not suited to the neighborhood that we are attempting to preserve.

(3) We appreciate that the City of St. Paul has adopted what are presumed to be enlightened policies relating to cars/parking/mass transit, thereby predisposing an approval for a variance on the typical parking requirements. But we are concerned that there are specific factors here that argue against this variance. There is, at any given time of day, little to no street parking available in the area of this proposal. Quite apart from the parking that may be required for residents of the building, we would hope that they would all have friends and family who will visit. It is a LOT of units, and there WILL BE significant additional traffic and parking in a section of West 7th that is already stressed. We applaud the efforts of the developers to deal with the parking issue with creative means, internal to the building. But this is of no help whatever for the ancillary parking pressures of service personnel, delivery personnel, and visitors. How will parking for these uses be accommodated?

It is also worth noting that this area is not now notably well-served by public transit. A street car line? How many times has this concept surfaced, and how many years might it be until it happens? And when it does, will it be fast and convenient enough for people to forego their cars?

I deeply appreciate your consideration of these perspectives as you deliberate granting these variances.

Sincerely,
Barbara McCormick
30 Irvine Park
St. Paul, MN 55102

I am against these CUP and variance request because:

A seven foot building would be too tall and not keeping with the neighborhood style, character and aesthetic. All buildings west of Grand Ave. are significantly shorter and much closer to residential homes. This is not downtown. This building should not be taller than 55 feet, similar to the adjacent hotel.

We already have extreme parking issues in this area. This building would not provide enough parking for it's residents.

Brittney Schuller
22 Douglas St
Saint Paul Mn

Sent from my iPad

I am writing to express my disapproval of the variances requested for construction of a 7 story apartment and retail space at 337 West 7th. Specifically I am against allowing the variances as they relate to:

1. Permitting a 7 story building on the site. 7 stories at 85 feet is too tall for the location and surrounding neighborhood. The building should be limited to 55 feet/4-5 stories. The variance should be denied.
2. Reducing the required parking to 111 spaces. The building should have at least 1 parking space per unit PLUS parking sufficient for the retail occupants and their patrons. The variance should be denied. I feel very strongly about this both as a resident who knows our neighborhood parking issues and as a former 14 year resident of Chicago who has experience with what happens both when parking needs are not properly planned and when they are well planned.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to neighborhood needs and wishes.

Sincerely,

Catherine Fletcher
270 Goodrich Ave.
Saint Paul, M n 55102
651-788-7014

Members of the St Paul Zoning Committee,

I am writing to express **opposition** to the conditional use permits requested by the planners of the apartment complex on the current site of the Bonfe's Mechanical shop, 337 West 7th Street.

My understanding is that they are requesting:

- 1) Height increase from 55 to 85 feet
- 2) Decreased set-back from the street
- 3) Decrease in required parking spaces for the number of units proposed.

Why I am opposed:

- 1) We have an excellent local reference for the 55 foot height standard in the recently built Residence Inn next door. A building towering 30 feet, or 55% higher than that and directly on W 7th is completely out of place. The 15 story building one block east sets a standard for bad height allowances; at least that building is back from the street substantially. No reason, other than cramming more revenue into the building, for allowing this.
- 2) West 7th is not downtown. Tall buildings have to be set back to avoid the urban canyon effect. The lot is small and screwy as it is. Do not create a giant wall on the sidewalk. This is actually a neighborhood still. Stick with the set-back guidelines.
- 3) While there may well be a street car running down W7 at some point, at this time owning a car is still very common. Allowing fewer parking spaces than current code will create a lot of unwelcome attempts at street parking or parking in others' lots (the existing apartments across W7, for example). Again, no good reason for this other than profit motive for the owners.

*By the way, it is not yet code, but it would be wise to require the builder to install adequate power access throughout the parking area to allow for overnight charging of Electric Vehicles, an inevitable trend coming our way in very short order—>Please look over this resource: www.MultiHousingCharging.com

Lastly, I understand not holding an in-person public meeting in this time of COVID-19, but every other meeting on the planet is on ZOOM or similar video access site. Why is this zoning meeting not being offered to the public as any other Zoning meeting would be?

Charles Stephens
151 Goodrich Ave
St Paul, MN 55102

Dear Secretary,

I am writing in opposition to the CUP pending for the project at the Bonfee Mechanical site for the following reasons and asking that my comments to be included:

- 1) The height of the building is inappropriate for a structure outside of the downtown area. Zoning regulations matter. If our urban planners, city government, residents and citizens of Saint Paul wanted taller structures outside of the downtown area, they/we would have reflected that in our zoning codes. A divergent from the code requires conditions-a Conditional Use Permit. What are the conditions here? “ 1. Final plans approved by the Zoning Administrator for this use shall be in substantial compliance with the plan submitted and approved as part of this application; and 2. The alley vacation is approved by the Saint Paul City Council.” Not a very high bar to comply with considering a more that 50% variance from the zoning height.
- 2) A parking variance will greatly exacerbate the already insufficient parking in the area. A parking study recently concluded that parking is insufficient in the area. Now are we going to allow another development not to have enough parking? The argument that the renters will prefer not to have cars maybe has some value but has not been definitively concluded. What about their visitors? There is no visitor parking proposed. Where will they park or do the developers concluded that there tenants will not have cars and nor will their visitors? Bonfee right now puts up their OWN sign stating that 30 minute parking will be strictly enforced. They know parking is an issue in this area and for their developers to conclude otherwise is disingenuous. Again the conditions for the permit are weak.

Sincerely
Dirk Dantuma
59 Irvine Park
Saint Paul MN 55102

PED Zoning Committee Secretary,

We already do not have enough parking in this area. Streets are often full and already have much legal parking around my house.

View this area should not be dominated by tall buildings obstructing historical and natural views of this neighborhood. I moved I moved here a few years ago because it is amazing neighborhood with tons of history and we as residents should not be directly imposed on for the sake of someone looking to capitalize on gross number of units impacting the view and the parking issues of this neighborhood. So building 7 story apartment complex is not inline with the area and should not be allowed to be this tall. It is not iconic landmark such as the Schmidt brewery or cathedral or even high bridge.

I am not saying this apartment should not be built, but we should be thinking how well it fits into our neighborhood and what restrictions or variances should be accepted. Lets keep this area looking great and it is not through large obstructing building that induces more issues into the area.

Thanks,

Dylan Hager

Resident @ 194 Goodrich ave St Paul, MN 55102

Zoning Committee,

We are against the requested conditional use permits on the 337 West 7th Apartment Project because:

- We do not believe a 7 story building is in keeping with our neighborhood or other recent construction projects. The 55 foot limit seems reasonable but 85 feet does not! A building of that height would overwhelm the surrounding area and not be in keeping with other building heights.
- Parking is a major concern already in our neighborhood. Creating an apartment building with inadequate space for cars to accommodate all residents will add considerably to parking congestion and depletion. Please limit number of units to the amount of parking space you can provide for your tenants.

Please don't get greedy. You are pushing it.

Respectfully,
Deborah and Michael Padgett
612-670-3257
274 Goodrich Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55102

We strongly oppose the conditional use permits reducing the number of required car parking and allowing a height variance.

This is a poorly thought out project and will harm the neighborhood fabric and increase congestion!

Dave and Sue Thune
26 Irvine Park
St. Paul, MN 55102

651-230-4811

Greetings,

My wife and I just learned of the request to increase the height and reduce the number of parking spaces at the proposed development on 336 W 7th. I also understand a proper hearing will not take place on account of COVID-19 concerns. Therefore, we are sending in our input as neighbors via email.

We are vehemently opposed to both conditional use permits.

-The code exists for a reason, and an equally compelling reason for an exception has not been expressed.

-An 85 foot tall building is NOT congruent with the aesthetic and spirit of our beloved historic neighborhood.

-Not abiding by the existing code for the distance of the building from the curb is equally as unwarranted.

-Lastly, it is absolutely absurd to only install 111 parking spaces. Parking is already a problem in the neighborhood. Whoever is making this request, clearly knows nothing about our neighborhood. If they had consulted anyone who lives here. they'd know that's impossible.

We hereby voice our support for denying the requested conditional use permits. I happen to know of at least a dozen neighbors that feel the same way. I'm confident many more would agree as well.

Eric and Heather Foss

Homeowners

185 Goodrich Ave

St Paul MN 55102

763-229-2878

Dear Committee Members,

Please do not grant the conditional use permit to allow an 85foot tall building on this stretch of West 7th Street. 55 feet is already too tall!

This street is already difficult to transverse on foot or in a car during the frequent events downtown.

Let us look at how our city feels. Dark and claustrophobic or open and light filled. The street scape and city fabric should not be sacrificed to pad the pockets of out of town developers.

I am not against development or high density housing, but let us build wisely and beautifully.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Bishop

192 Goodrich Ave,

St Paul, MN 55102

St. Paul Zoning Committee,

My family lives in Historic Irvine Park and I would like to submit concerns I have with the proposal for the new apartment building and retail space at the corner of Smith Avenue and West 7th Street. While I am supportive of affordable housing (which I think an argument could be made that the rents for this project are not given the small square footage), I am concerned about the number of variances being issued in our area over the past few years which ultimately erode the purpose for which the variances were established. In this case, we are talking about parking and height variances.

Parking variances seem to be popular in this area but there isn't support for it from our area neighbors. It seems our city government continues to make decisions without the citizens' and some local business' input. The area is stressed right now for parking – building another apartment building with less than adequate parking (111 spaces for 192 units) will only diminish the property values and make it more difficult for the existing businesses to attract consumers. Events at Xcel particularly stress the area now. I believe the following more recent building projects had parking variances – and those with city dwellers having far less than one parking space per unit. If that is not the case, I would like to be corrected:

- Oxbow Urban Rentals
- Irvine Exchange Apartments
- Residence Inn Hotel
- Cossetta's Market expansion and addition of Louis Ristorante
- Is there any parking variance for the new hotel across from the Xcel Center?

The proposed construction is also asking for a height variance, which does not incorporate the building into the existing neighborhood and area at all. Again, variances were established for a reason and the present height of 75 feet already puts it out of scale with the surrounding area.

I believe that the discussion of continued variances in this area of West 7th needs broader input from the neighborhood's constituents via public meetings. This is a bigger issue than how the city has been approaching "one-off" requests which more often than not get approved via your committee. You also have an historic district that requires additional thought and sensitivity that appears to be absent in many of the decisions and discussions that are occurring in the area's building projects. Therefore, **I am not supportive of the current proposed variances and strongly urge you to consider denying them.**

Thank you.
Michele Harris
234 Ryan Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-207-6155

Dear City of Saint Paul Zoning Committee, I don't want the new apartment building for 337 W. 7th St. to be taller than 55 feet. I don't want a seven story building, with all of its residents and automobiles, to be squeezed into such a small space. A conditional use permit NOT to meet the requirement of a correlating amount of space from the curb should NOT be granted. On what grounds should it be granted?

The car park situation in our neighborhood is already beyond capacity. Why would the city allow a developer to create housing units and not adequate parking for each unit? Do you have statistics to prove that people living in this new building will not own automobiles?

The West End neighborhood is attractive and inviting to residents and visitors because of its unique residential character. We have a vastly different personality from downtown St. Paul. Small homes with little turnover provide a consistency and tradition for the neighborhood, which in turn protect the property values of residential home owners. The small businesses lining W. 7th St. serve us while preserving our residential personality.

An 85 foot apartment building in the same block with small old homes would ruin the aesthetic spirit of and drastically change the personality of the neighborhood, and exacerbate the parking and traffic nightmares for residents.

Please consider postponing the hearing until citizens can convene and provide input to these decisions.

Sincerely,

Margaret Kinney

315 Ryan Ave.,

St. Paul, MN 55102

Board member, the Community Reporter Newspaper

Zoning Committee
City of Saint Paul

Dear Zoning Committee:

The Historic Irvine Park Association (HIPA), opposes the terms of the new conditional use permit and variance requested of the Zoning Committee (Committee) by Northland Real Estate Group, LLC (Northland) for an apartment building with retail space to be built on the current site of Bonfe Mechanical at 337 W 7th/366-372 Smith Ave N, File #20-021-2332.

There are over 200 homes within the boundaries of the Irvine Park Historic District, all close to the proposed site. For over 40 years the HIPA has represented the interests of those living in and near Irvine Park. On behalf of the organization, the undersigned officers of HIPA submit these comments to the Committee.

HIPA's opposition to the conditional use permit should not be interpreted as opposition to affordable housing in the greater neighborhood. Affordable housing is needed on West Seventh Street and elsewhere in St. Paul.

Instead, we oppose the increased congestion and loss of on-street parking which will inevitably result if the required parking for this building is dropped from 136 spaces to 111. We are also concerned with increasing the height of the building to 85 ft from the now allowed 75 ft.

The Committee knows the proposed building has already required a revision of zoning, use, and planning applicable to the site. City land use law has been and, if this proposal is approved, will be dramatically changed to accommodate the developer. The normal course is that the developer accommodates to the law.

Before getting into specifics we have three general comments on the site and Northland's approach.

First, the present application is the third change Northland has requested in the last five months. In December the Committee approved changing the site's zoning designation from T2 to T3 allowing a reduction in parking spaces. It also approved a CUP allowing the building's height to be increased to 75 feet from the previous 55 feet, which applied to the adjacent Residential Inn Hotel. It is not clear whether Northland intends to request any more changes in the future.

Second, in their December report to the Committee, city staff cited two mutually exclusive provisions of the District 9 Area Plan in support of Northland's request. The first was Section 12 reading:

Promote stretches between key nodes as the appropriate location for higher density residential use, in order to add diversity to the housing stock while preserving the traditional neighborhood fabric... (emphasis supplied).

The second provision cited was Section 16 of the Plan, reading:

Support nodes of retail businesses at the intersections of West Seventh and Kellogg, Smith, St. Clair, Jefferson, Randolph and Montreal Lexington, rather than as a continuous strip of retail throughout the length of West Seventh. (emphasis supplied)

In other words, residential buildings should be located between important intersections or nodes and retail businesses should be located directly at those same intersections. Inexplicably, city staff have

allowed Northland to have it both ways. Section 12 is cited as supporting residential use while Section 16 is cited as supporting retail use. It is physically impossible for the building to be located both between key nodes and at a key node.

Actually, the building site is located at the intersection of Smith and West Seventh which is why it has both Smith and West Seventh addresses. Smith and West Seventh is a key node under the Plan and so should be devoted to retail uses which it has been up to now. However, except for part of the first floor, the proposed building will be clearly residential. In fact, space for retail has been dropped from 2,500 sq. ft. in Northland's December request to 1,800 sq. ft in this request. In addition, the loading space for retail was eliminated in the December action.

To be clear, the Plan explicitly states residential buildings like this should be located between such intersections. If Area Plans are to be ignored or manipulated as in this case, city officials should do so in a transparent fashion so residents understand their value.

Finally, Northland claims that granting the increased height is necessary because it discovered the bedrock under the site was shallower than expected. The firm knew or should have known there was shallow bedrock in the area. A basic preliminary examination would have shown what every builder in the neighborhood has learned since the first cellar was dug in the 1850s---millions of years of flowing river has worn down the surface so the bedrock being very close to it.

As stated earlier, HIPA has two specific objections to Northland's proposed CUP.

It opposes the decreased on-site parking from 136 spaces to 111. When the site's zoning was changed from T-2 to T-3 last year, the usual one space per unit rule was dropped. Instead, Northland was able to cut 25% of required spaces and then 10% more to allow for bicycle parking. That's why at present it is required to provide only 136 spaces. HIPA does not believe that 136 is sufficient but knows that it is preferable to 111 spaces.

Northland now wants the Committee to allow it to reduce the 136 spaces to only 111 spaces for the 192 units. In other words, the occupants of only 57% of its units will have a single space, the remaining 43% won't. Admittedly, some residents won't have cars but most will since the neighborhood is not well-served by transit.

The only two employment hubs reachable without a transfer to other buses or LRT are downtown St. Paul and the MSP Airport/ Mall of America. The majority of residents of this building will need to have one car and if a couple, two cars. Those cars will have to be parked somewhere. Likewise, residents' guests will need to find parking spaces.

There are not enough parking spaces in this neighborhood today. Adding more vehicles will make it even more difficult for current residents without off street parking to find spaces. There are few, if any, all-night parking spaces available near the site. Already most customers to the bar, coffee shop and restaurant nearly adjacent to the proposed building have to park across West Seventh Street in the Leech/McBoal/Goodrich/Wilkin and Irvine Park neighborhoods. More important, these neighborhood streets are already crowded with vehicles parking to attend events at the XCEL Center or going to bars and restaurants on West Seventh.

HIPA is also concerned with the request to increase the allowable height to 85 ft. As stated earlier the Committee allowed Northland to raise maximum height from 55 ft to 75 ft. as well as eliminating the only required loading space for retail.

There are no buildings within two blocks of the site nearly as high as Northland proposes. For example, the adjacent Residence Inn Hotel is only 55 feet high (five stories). Buildings across West Seventh are only one and two stories high. Some buildings on the other side of Grand Avenue are higher but they are more than two blocks away. The present allowed 75 ft maximum for the site is 20 ft higher than any neighboring structures. Though we disagreed with that change and believe the resulting building at 75 ft. will be out of scale with the neighborhood, we acknowledge the Committee has made its decision. However, to allow an additional 10 ft does not make sense!

We are also concerned allowing the building to reach 85 ft will be a precedent for erecting higher and higher buildings in the area. The affected neighborhood is a transition area from the dense downtown to the predominantly single-family neighborhoods further down West Seventh Street. Increased building heights will erode the unique nature of the popular West Seventh restaurant and entertainment district and the nearby historic residential areas. To change that, a more detailed conversation is necessary than can be allowed in a single committee hearing closed to the public, by necessity.

Thanks for considering HIPA's comments.

Elyse Jensen
President
223 Walnut St.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Peter Tanghe
Secretary
234 Ryan Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Robert Corbett
Vice President
299 Ryan Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Megan Kluthe
Treasurer
47 Irvine Park
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Hello,

I'm responding to the Zoning Committee meeting scheduled for April 23 concerning 337 7th Street West.

I oppose exceeding 55 feet for height. That is too tall for this neighborhood.

I oppose the parking spaces of 110 instead of 136 for 192 units. I oppose any reduction of required parking spaces. This neighborhood lacks parking spaces. Already (before COVID-19) we saw people parking for restaurants, events and other stuff. Yes, we are a restricted parking area, but that did not stop people from parking and parking enforcement rarely occurred. Parking challenges occurred at all times of day and days.

Rita West
172 Forbes Ave
St Paul, MN 55102

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to voice my concern about the proposed apartment building at 337 West 7th Street. My concerns are several:

1. The height of the building is totally inconsistent with this community. It would also be taller than structures around it. Therefore, I believe that if the building is built, it should not be taller than 55 feet.
2. The number of parking spaces proposed are considerably less than the number of units proposed. As a fairly close neighbor, I am really concerned about what this would do to parking in the community. Parking in this neighborhood is already an issue and I cannot imagine that the lack of spaces in proportion to the number of units would not cause further parking issues in this neighborhood.
3. I am also concerned about the effect adding over 100 Vehicles would do to the already congested streets in this neighborhood.
4. I believe that there should be an in-person meeting about this issue. This would allow others in the community to voice their concerns if they have them. I was just made aware of the significant issues with this proposed building. I do understand that a meeting is not possible at this time, but do hope that you will reconsider and set up an in-person meeting at a time when that would be possible.

I would be more than happy to elaborate, or answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for reading this and hopefully considering addressing some of the above.

Sharon Lynch

63 Douglas Street

Saint Paul

651.225.1955/612.998.4224

Hello and good evening,

I'm writing to let you know that I am against granting conditional use permits to the potential building project on 337 West 7th (where Bonfe's Mechanical and lot is located).

1. **Please limit the height and scale of this building to 55 feet**, which is the city's zoning limit – which used to be 45 feet, but was increased for the hotel on 200 Grand. This proposed 7 story building does not fit the size or scale of our neighborhood.
2. **Please do not allow this project a c.u.p. to not follow the zoning rule that a building must be set back from the curb depending on height.**
3. Why are the developers now asking for additional units to be allowed on this project? Please do not allow additional units to be added to this project.
4. **PARKING** – this continues to be a HUGE issue for this particular area of West 7th. Please do not allow this building project a c.u.p. for a reduced number of parking spaces on the building site – it is unrealistic and irresponsible to our neighborhood to allow 192 units to be built, but then granting permission for only 111 parking spaces to be created.
 - a. **If every unit** only owned one car – that would still push 82 residents' vehicles into our neighborhood – where the parking is just not available.
 - b. **If some units owned more than one car** – that would push even more vehicles into our neighborhood!
 - c. We already have big problems with non-permitted vehicles parking in areas that are designated as “permit only” parking – and we see little to no enforcement.
5. This project should not be allowed to move forward because ***IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR THIS NEIGHBORHOOD***. We aren't against something being built on this particular piece of land, but it should have to follow all zoning rules. This is a very historic area – we really appreciate all that the zoning board did to protect the Hope Fire Station, and then have the hotel at 200 Grand Avenue stay within the scale of the fire station.
Why would you now grant an apartment building that would undo all that we've worked to achieve in this area??

Thanks and be well,
Stephanie Moss – 56 Leech Street

Dear Secretary,

Regarding the apartment building being considered for 337 West 7th Street, We believe the building should not exceed 55 Ft in height, and that it should provide enough parking space for it's residents. The neighborhood can not absorb any more on street parking! We should not have to deal with issues the builder does not want to address in order to make it easier or more profitable for the builder. Why did they choose this building site knowing the limitations, then expect to expand their building's height limits and ignore obvious parking congestion in our area? Regarding the height of the building, this is not downtown. Please so not allow conditional use permits for that building. What is to stop future builders all expecting the same?

Sincerely,

Susan Nielsen

susan.nielsen@earthlink.net

Douglas Nielsen

grandhillgallery@earthlink.net

Dear Zoning Committee,

I am writing this letter to express concern and disagreement with the proposed conditional use agreement permits for 337 West 7th.

A building taller than the now 55 foot high hotel at 200 Grand should not be allowed. It would not fit with the scale of our neighborhood. We are proudly West 7th residents - and we are not against a new building project there - but it absolutely must fit the size of our neighborhood. There aren't any residential buildings that tall within a 2 block radius.

We are surprised that you would consider these c.u.p.s when your committee did such a great job protecting the Hope Firehouse and it's scale with a hotel that didn't tower over it.

This tiny area of land isn't right for the massive structure that is planned. We implore you to deny these multiple conditional use permits for:

1. An increased number of units.
2. C.U.P. for height. Keep it 55 feet and no higher.
3. There must be adequate parking spaces for the building's occupants.
4. It must be back from the curb, as all tall buildings are required to be.

If this project cannot meet the zoning ordinances, we ask that you not approve it. We love our neighborhood, and this building would not fit in the size, scale or style of this West 7th neighborhood. I am also very concerned about the amount of parking that will be pushed into our neighborhood. We already get enough overflow from Xcel Energy events.

We ask that you honor our neighborhood's wishes.

Sincerely,
Erin Thune
56 Leech Street

My name is Fred Livesay, I live at 262 Goodrich Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55102

I write to voice my opinion against allowing conditional use permits to be issued to change the building from a 55 foot height to an increased 85 feet and to allow for more parking spaces than the currently allowed or allotted 111. As a preservationist carpenter and someone with an advanced degree in preservation and museum studies, it is clear that this area of West Seventh does not need to be assaulted further with higher buildings and increased density. Nor is a taller building in any way in keeping with the nearby residential and commercial buildings that this neighborhood has so diligently fought to preserve so as to keep the character and flavor of the neighborhood intact. At some point, the downtown height of buildings must stop and the real character of the neighborhood be protected. It is already difficult to slow unfettered growth in building heights and even harder in this neighborhood to find parking for local businesses and residents when events or just lovely weather brings people in to visit this area. Growth must be managed, thoughtfully with the input of those who are directly in the neighborhood as well as those who are charged with carrying out the desires of the local residents and not just new building owners. Further, alternate forms of transportation, foot, bike, bus should be encouraged by our city not more cars. If anything, this Covid virus has made it literally clear, that cars need to be curbed to keep our air as clean as it is today, and to be thoughtful about how we conduct public meetings (look what happened with Wisconsin voters in the primary). Better results will come for the city and the residents if this meeting is postponed until everyone can participate on a level playing field, not just a few. Feel free to contact me at 651-224-2898 if you have further questions or need clarification of my stance on this sort of project.

Respectfully,

Fred Livesay

Dear Secretary,

First, I'd like to say that I'm incredibly disappointed in the process modifications surrounding today's Zoning Committee meeting. While I understand the necessity for preventing in person participation, there is no reason with the abundance of technology today that this meeting could not be virtually interactive.

Simply allowing us to email you in advance is not sufficient and feels like a blatant attempt to exclude participation in opposition to this project.

That being said, please see the attached letter outlining why we are opposed to the approval of this project's conditional use permits.

Regards,

Elyse & Heath Jensen

223 Walnut Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

ATTACHED LETTER -

Dear Zoning Committee:

We oppose the terms of the new conditional use permit and variance requested of the Zoning Committee (Committee) by Northland Real Estate Group, LLC (Northland) for an apartment building with retail space to be built on the current site of Bonfe Mechanical at 337 W 7th/366-372 Smith Ave N, File #20-021-2332.

We have been residents of Historic Irvine Park for near seven years and have chosen this neighborhood to raise our family, run our small business, and invest in the restoration our home. To be clear, our opposition to the conditional use permit should not be interpreted as opposition to affordable housing in the greater neighborhood. Affordable housing is needed on West Seventh Street and elsewhere in St. Paul.

Instead, we oppose the increased congestion and loss of on-street parking which will inevitably result if the required parking for this building is dropped from 136 spaces to 111. We are also concerned with increasing the height of the building to 85 ft from the now allowed 75 ft and the impact that will have on the feel of our neighborhood as a transitional one from downtown.

There are not enough parking spaces in this neighborhood today. Adding more vehicles will make it even more difficult for current residents without off street parking to find spaces. It is nearly impossible to turn left onto West 7th in this area already and crossing the intersections on foot are terrifying as cars move illegally around each other on the right-hand side. These neighborhood streets are already crowded with vehicles parking to attend events at the XCEL Center or going to bars and restaurants on West Seventh. We do not want them made worse.

We are also concerned with the request to increase the allowable height to 85 ft. There are no buildings within two blocks of the site nearly as high as Northland proposes. For example, the adjacent Residence Inn Hotel is only 55 feet high (five stories). Buildings across West Seventh are only one and two stories

high. Some buildings on the other side of Grand Avenue are higher but they are more than two blocks away. The present allowed 75 ft maximum for the site is 20 ft higher than any neighboring structures. Though we disagreed with that change and believe the resulting building at 75 ft. will be out of scale with the neighborhood, we acknowledge the Committee has made its decision. However, to allow an additional 10 ft does not make sense. **Our neighborhood is not an extension of downtown.**

We are also concerned allowing the building to reach 85 ft will be a precedent for erecting higher and higher buildings in the area. **The affected neighborhood is a transition area from the dense downtown to the predominantly single-family neighborhoods further down West Seventh Street. Increased building heights will erode the unique nature of the popular West Seventh restaurant and entertainment district and the nearby historic residential areas.** To change that, a more detailed conversation is necessary than can be allowed in a single committee hearing closed to the public, by necessity.

Regards,

Heath & Elyse Jensen

223 Walnut Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Zoning Committee,

My husband and I have resided in the West 7th Street neighborhood for 23 years and have seen many changes over the years – some good and some bad. We are very concerned about the variances being considered for the development of the subject property.

In keeping with the surrounding neighborhood, we believe that the building should NOT be taller than 55 feet. It should not tower above its neighbor, the Residence Inn, or the surrounding buildings. This would change the scale and feel of the neighborhood. We are AGAINST a 7 story building being built in this location.

Secondly, we are extremely concerned that the building will only be providing 136 parking spaces for 192 units. We already have an issue with people parking on our neighborhood streets who work at United Hospital, work at and/or visit Little Sisters of the Poor, live in currently existing apartment complexes in the neighborhood and visitors dining on W. 7th Street or attending events at the Xcel Center. This would push additional parking into our neighborhoods causing greater congestion. We have seen this happen in other neighborhoods, where apartment complexes are built with too few parking spaces with the idea that they will be marketed to people who will be taking public transportation. Unfortunately, the reality is that most people own a car and the overflow parking is pushed onto the neighboring streets. Many of our neighbors do not have off-street parking and creating competition for parking in front of their houses will create a hardship for them.

Again, we would like the Zoning Committee to now that we are AGAINST the Conditional Use Permits that have been proposed. Thank you for your consideration.

Jolynn & Frank Martin
55 Wilkin Street
St. Paul, MN 55102
612-644-7486

Good day,

I want to address our / my neighbors concerns of a variance for 337 W7th Street. I live at 170 McBoal Street (Leech & McBoal) We have a very nice View of the Cathedral and the James J. Hill Resistance in which adding 30 more feet onto already a questionable 55 ft is not very neighborly in which will obstructe a great feel to the area. I am against the additional 30 feet, less parking is a problem (if a business is going to open they need to address there own issues not push it into the direction of the people that Live here.) I am in favor of the proposed retail as long as it fits the decor of the neighborhood (style, building materials). Please call with any questions you may have.

Thank you,

John Gladis (170 McBoal Street) 612-743-3024

We Strongly oppose the variances requested for the building at [337 w7th st.](#)
[Especially](#) the parking variance. This neighborhood is already completely congested with parking.

We currently pay for permit parking and too often can not find a parking spot on our block(never mind in front of our home). The neighborhood association here has spent countless hours over the years trying to remedy this major parking issue.

Besides this, the size of this proposed structure is not welcomed.

Joe O'Brien
JCO Construction, LLC
75 Douglas St
St Paul, MN 55102

JCOconstruction@icloud.com
(917) 312-6103

Building height and parking provisions are the areas of focus that I wish to address through this email. Today's meeting of the Zoning Committee will be determining the results of the 337 West 7th Street, Developers Conditional Use Permit requests.

The developer 'anticipates' a lesser need for parking spaces. Did anyone speak with residents of 'similar developments' in our AMI region to find out if this is true? Research surveys of micro unit development residents reveal that lack of visitor parking space is a significant concern of those who reside in micro units.

The developer once again 'anticipates' that the rents will be appropriately scaled to the 60 to 80% AMI of our region. What exactly are those rental dollar amounts/square foot? A review of area AMI (including Minneapolis) reveals some interesting data on the amount of rent people of varied incomes should be able to afford. For reference this information can be found in charts included in Ford Site Plan documentation.

The recommended amount to spend on housing, by expert financial advisors, no matter what your income level is, is no more than 30% of income. We know that is unrealistic today, especially in urban areas. We also know that ROI from micro units is higher /square foot than conventional one- or two-bedroom units. The build cost is higher for a micro unit, however that cost is readily recovered because of the larger ROI. In other words, the monthly rent may be 20-25% lower than average, but the ROI remains higher than that of conventional rental units.

I mention the previous because it is a factor in rental housing costs for many who work at the hospital and nearby businesses. They already walk and use public transportation. I am speaking of the people who do not make \$15/hr performing essential services at United Hospital. I am speaking of housekeeping, cafeteria, and service employees in particular. These are most often people of color. They are not 'them', or 'those people', they are 'us' in different circumstances. I am aware that the previous is not the concern of today's meeting. However, I am not confident that this project will in any way enhance our ability to become more inclusive.

Current West 7th residents also need rental housing, not just those who are attracted to live in a niche concept of housing in our richly unique neighborhood.

While it is true that society is changing, it doesn't mean that 'to keep up with the times' we no longer should seek to maintain standards in keeping with the long history of development and redevelopment of business and housing stock in the West 7th area.

Code permits a building height of 75 ft. That Code should, in this instance, be followed.

I urge that the height and parking variances for the development of the 'Bonfe's Mechanical' site be denied.

Respectfully yours,

Lorraine (Lori) Harris
218 Goodrich Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55102-2716
Cell: (612)751-8115

Good evening.

I am concerned about several proposals for the utilization of Bonfe's space on West 7th.

We have had wonderful results in retaining the very old Hope Fire House which is near to the above property. The West 7th street businesses and the surrounding neighborhoods are filled with the largest number of the oldest buildings in St. Paul.

Often, our buildings were built modestly ... not too large and not too tall. They fit in visually into a cohesive gathering of businesses and dwellings.

I have two major concerns for the proposed building:

First, the height is significantly more than any of the adjacent buildings by a considerable amount. Recommendation: reduce height by a minimum of 20 feet.

Second: Our parking is extremely limited with respect to both businesses and residences. With proposals for transit on West 7th, several of the preferred recommendations will also reduce street parking. Recommendation: It is realistic to view that some units will have no vehicle, some one and some more than one. For nearly 200 units, to allow for occasional visitors vehicles plus the residents, at least 75% parking should be the minimum requirement.

Sincerely,

Laurel Severson

376 St. Clair Avenue

St. Paul MN 55102

651-227-3665

Lseverson99@gmail.com

Dear Sir or Madame,

My name is Naomi Austin , I live at 90 Garfield Street in the Little Bohemia Neighborhood of West 7th.

I realize that the comment period is over but I have just been informed by a neighbor about the proposed changes to the height and removal of parking spaces to the proposed building at 337 West 7th. I attended the original meeting of the Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association and what is now proposed is completely different as to what was brought before the association and I object strongly to the changes. The additional height is completely out of character with the neighborhood.

I have also attended numerous meetings sponsored by the City discussing the parking issues of the neighborhood and now feel that those meetings were a complete waste of time . That the city could even consider allowing a reduction in parking in a neighborhood where parking problems are a top concern shows a complete lack of caring and understanding of the issues. It leaves me with the cynical view that the additional tax revenues of the project trumps the needs of the neighborhood.

Sincerely, Naomi Austin

From: Carra Otten <carra.lapetitefleur@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2020 10:17 AM

To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary

Subject:Against proposed building height:

Attachments: 20200423_101255.jpg

Kyle Otten, Carra Otten, and Anja Otten, who reside at 259 Prescott St. St. Paul, MN 55107 are very much so against this

The City of Saint Paul Zoning Committee is considering zoning variances for a **7 story apartment building** with retail space at 337 West 7th (where Bonfe Mechanical currently resides). The company building the apartment building is asking for zoning variances for:

- Increase in height up to 85 feet. (For reference, the current Residence Inn Hotel on 200 Grand Avenue is 55 feet tall)
- **111 parking spaces for 192 units** - not enough parking spaces onsite for proposed building residents.

We are against these variance requests because:

- A 7 story, 85 foot apartment building would be too tall and not in keeping with our neighborhood style or aesthetic. This is not downtown. **This building should not be taller than 55 feet.**
- We already have extreme parking issues in this area. This building **would not provide enough parking** for its residents - pushing those looking for parking spaces into *our neighborhoods* (and onto permit-only spaces, which are already not being enforced.).

Greetings.

I have attached my name to some group responses to the proposed Bonfe site project and our specific concerns with the parking and height variance requests.

I wanted to add a personal point that the focus on rental property for development seems unwise.

My concerns include:

1. People not having easy ways to build equity
2. People not feeling as invested in the well being of an area if they are just renters
3. Increases in population and a need for services that isn't matched by a wider property tax base.
4. A lack of options as we age for high density home ownership opportunities in the area.

To me the balance of high density rental vs owned is being lost. My wife and I (as well as the city) benefitted from the city supported development of condos in the Schmidt brewery neighborhoods. I think more of those offerings should be considered in this Smith /west seventh area.

Pete Tanghe

234 Ryan Ave, St Paul, MN 55102

Tanghems@gmail.com

I took testimony from Richard Kutz, 96 Leech Street, this afternoon. He did not have access to email, so I am paraphrasing here. He had two main concerns:

1. His main concern is that the proposed building is way too tall and will block views to the Cathedral from his property, his neighbors, and homes on McBoal.
2. His second concern is that there will be too few proposed parking spaces. He is in a parking permit district, but it is not always enforced and the proposed variance will make the issue worse.

Please include this with the other testimony to the Zoning Commission.

Thank you,
Anton

Hello,

My name is Sarah Weiss I live on 26 Douglas St, St Paul. I am against allowing the variances for the building project for a 7 story apartment building on 337 west 7th. I am against increasing the height from 55-85ft. The building would be too tall and not keep with our neighborhood spirit, scale, or size. I do not want to increase the parking issues that the neighborhood already has. To repeat I am against allowing these variances for this building project.

Sincerely,

Sarah Weiss

To The City of Saint Paul Zoning Committee,

I am writing to you to ask you to deny the Conditional use permits for the proposed apartment and retail building at 337 West 7th st. St. Paul.

I am against these conditional use permit requests and the process by which the hearing is being handled because:

1. Part of the value and what attracted us to living in this area is being able to see the cathedral and other historical buildings from our windows. Allowing an 85 foot building to be built in this historical community would guarantee the loss of landscape that drew us here.
2. Not having enough parking spaces for the proposed apartment building would mean that there would be bleed-over into the already extremely overcrowded, unenforced permit-only parking in the surrounding streets.
3. The neighborhoods that the proposed apartment/retail building would impact are not allowed to attend the hearing due to Covid-19 yet the hearing is still being held with limited neighborhood input through email. Community involvement should be accommodated or this meeting should be postponed.

Thank you for your time,
Tanya Pederson
199 McBoal st.
St. Paul, MN 55102