

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixies Project
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:46:33 AM

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

From: Michelle Loken Price <mlokenprice@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:16 AM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Dixies Project

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

Hello,

As a resident in Crocus Hill at 877 Lincoln Ave, I have very strong opinions about preserving the unique character of the neighborhood. As a former resident of 27 St. Albans St. S., I feel passionate about our need to protect what has been cherished; the historic beauty of the street and surrounding buildings and businesses must stay in harmony with the residential.

This Dixies project is an eye sore; a big ugly box with cheap materials and oversized dimensions. Grand Ave does not need to bow down to big developers and change its standards for one family's profit. Grand Ave is special and uniquely charming. This project would tip the scale so that more big and cheap projects can destroy what the neighborhood has worked so tirelessly to preserve.

Thank you for your time.

Michelle Loken Price
877 Lincoln Ave.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue proposal
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:46:15 AM

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

From: Stephen Gadiant <stephenegadiant@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:10 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue proposal

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

Good evening,

My name is Stephen Gadiant and I oppose the proposed redevelopment at 695 Grand Avenue. I have lived at 809 Lincoln Avenue since 1978 and have witnessed the many changes that have occurred along the Grand Avenue corridor. This proposed project is too big and too tall for the area in question. The provisions for residential and customer parking are totally unrealistic and inadequate, and would be very detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood. I am supportive of mixed use development that would comply with the current zoning regulations for the east Grand Avenue overlay district, but am not supportive of exceptions or variances to the current zoning restrictions for this area of Grand Avenue. Thank you for your consideration.

Stephen Gadiant

Sent from my iPad

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue proposal
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:45:59 AM

From: John Miller <mille108@umn.edu>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 6:32 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue proposal

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

I am not in favor of the proposed development. Stick to the existing zoning regulations.

John W. Miller, Jr.

706 Lincoln Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55105

651-227-5410

Principal Bassoon, Minnesota Orchestra (Retired)

Adjunct Professor of Bassoon, University of Minnesota (Retired)

President, Minnesota Bassoon Association

From: [James Hardy](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: zoning application 695 Grand/Dixies
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 5:06:53 PM

Zoning:

My family has lived at 796 Summit Avenue for over 25 years.

I oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand. The proposal is simply too large for this area of Grand Avenue. Giving the proposal the green light will lead to block after block of tear-downs of existing properties to make way for additional large properties. We opposed Lund's initial suggestions for a similar large building right behind our home. The thought of a 5-story apartment complex looming over our backyard is frightening. The lack of privacy and sun blockage is concerning, not to mention potential loss in our property value.

5-story buildings are just too large for the corridor and character of the neighborhood. Parking can already be problematic and the addition of large numbers of units will bring more problems.

I also believe the "market-rate" proposed is really more of a luxury rate.

I believe that some development can be good to the neighborhood but please continue to enforce the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules. Mixed-use proposals that comply with current zoning rules should be given consideration, but the proposal for 695 simply does not comply.

Thanks for your consideration.

Brenda Hardy
796 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55106
hardy_25941@msn.com

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixie's Development: 695 Grand Avenue
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:45:35 AM

From: Katie Bergstrom <SUMMIT780@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 4:47 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Dixie's Development: 695 Grand Avenue

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

Dear Ms. Butler:

Please accept this e-mail as my opposition to the current zoning application to develop the existing Dixie's building at 695 Grand Avenue.

My name is Katie Bergstrom, and I live approximately 1.5 blocks away at 780 Summit Avenue.

I oppose the application because the proposed development is too large in scope, and completely out of scale with the current infrastructure on Grand Avenue. The size and nature of the project will harm the existing neighborhood exponentially.

I do support the current Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. As such, I do support a mixed-use development that complies with the existing Overlay and the current zoning rules.

Thank you--

Katie Bergstrom, Esq.
780 Summit Avenue
Summit780@msn.com

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Zoning Variance at 695 Grand Ave
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:45:30 AM

From: Eric Ruhland <dr.ruhland@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 4:40 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Zoning Variance at 695 Grand Ave

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

Dear Planning Commission,

My name is Eric Ruhland. I am a local home owner (790 Summit Ave), and local business owner(St Paul Pet Hospital).

I moved to St Paul over 8 years ago with the intention of starting a business and growing my family. I purchased my home on Summit Ave just over 7 years ago. During that time we have converted a dilapidated vacant home into a historic gem, and I retrofitted an old photo development area into a veterinary hospital. As a homeowner and business owner have obeyed every principle of historic preservation. I thought that my local leaders believed the same thing. I seem confused by the recent push to turn this neighborhood into something it is not.

By passing these variances you are disregarding the sacrifice of generations of people before you and jeopardizing the sensitive and intimate relationship between an exclusive historic residential neighborhood and its associated business district. Not one home owner I have spoken to in a 3 block radius of this project is on board with the variance. NOT ONE! I dont think you will find another issue that will be so sensitive with such a lasting impact on our community.

Are we the next Uptown? The next North Loop? I hope with all of my soul we are not.

Saint Paul has more history, character, and charm than that. I ask that you vote to reject these zoning variances proposed at 695 Grand Ave and others like it. We have not come all this way, being led by courageous leaders before us to bow to the pressure of the almighty dollar today.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eric Ruland

--

Dr. Eric Ruhland *Owner*
St. Paul Pet Hospital
Cell: **651-238-6815**
Office: **651-789-6275**
Fax: **651-225-0869**

From: [Acito-Clouthier](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue - opposition to project
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 8:30:00 PM

I want to express my opposition to the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies. I am a long time Summit Hill resident and believe the project is too big and too tall, and it is out of character with our neighborhood. It will damage the neighborhood.

I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules. I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules.

Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed.

Margaret Clouthier
715 Goodrich Avenue Goodrich Avenue

From: [Paul Acito](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Opposition to 695 Grand Avenue Zoning Exceptions
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 8:24:28 PM

I am writing to you to express my opposition to the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies. I am a long time Summit Hill resident and am astonished at the lack of representation of residents' sentiments in this process.

The Summit Hill Association's recent vote seemed biased and not inclusive of residents' opinions while favoring commercial interests.

This project is too big and too tall, and it is out of character with our neighborhood. It will damage the neighborhood.

However, I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules. I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules.

Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed.

Paul Acito
715 Goodrich Avenue Goodrich Avenue
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From: [Pereira, Luis \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixies/695 Grand Public Comment:Opposition to Rezoning. CUP and Variances
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 3:32:07 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

From: qwerty <jonmason659@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 11:48 PM

To: cedric.baker@gmail.com; tramhoang.sppc@gmail.com; adejoy@esndc.org; kristinemariongrill@gmail.com; nmhood@gmail.com; luiserangelmorales@gmail.com; jake.reilly76@gmail.com; usstmc@gmail.com; Pereira, Luis (CI-StPaul) <Luis.Pereira@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; aquanettaa@gmail.com; blindeke@gmail.com; gmcmurtrey07@gmail.com; k.mouacheupao@gmail.com; aperryman@genesysworks.org; mieeta@gmail.com; Jeff.risberg@gmail.com; wendyLunderwood@gmail.com; zhijun.yang@metrostate.edu; simon.taghioff@gmail.com

Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward1 <Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul) <Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward3 <Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward5 <Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward7 <Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Dixies/695 Grand Public Comment:Opposition to Rezoning. CUP and Variances

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



Dear Planning Commissioner:

Attached please find a link to a YouTube video that I would like to submit as public comment in opposition to the extreme land use intensity increases for Grand/ Dixies in the form of rezoning, CUP, and variances.

An earlier version, based on the March plan set, of this video was submitted as public comment to

the Summit Hill Association, on three occasions, but it was not admitted to the public record. An earlier version of the video was also shared with the development team.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=za7YMzu02W8&t=116s>

The current version was modeled at scale to match the plans and elevations that were submitted to the city on June 3, 2021. This model and video are true in scale and proportion to the design being submitted and the buildings in the immediate context. This new model reflects the increase in height that was added to the building as well as the minor adjustments to the configuration of the building mass such as balcony projections. The model was constructed in Trimble Sketchup and geolocated to the site.

This video was made to show what the developers Reuter Walton, and the architects ESG and the landowner Peter Kenifick were trying to hide from being viewed. These developers are proposing a monster. The video shows the full size and scale of this building in context. Notably, images provided by the developer never show the entire building nor do they show it in relation to the neighboring structures. This video shows how much this massively out of scale pushes right up against the neighboring residences with malice.

At the halfway point, there is an alternative design. This design was presented in the spirit of compromise and has been presented to the developer team. Notably, this compromise design follows the spirit not the letter of the height limit requirement-- it is four stories, not three. To mitigate the added height, it strictly follows the traditional neighborhood design standards: particularly the required step downs and setbacks, solar orientation, and residential transitions. This alternative design (46-54 units) would garner support with the immediate neighbors.

The response I received from the developer was that the alternative design would be economically "unfeasible." Indeed, the only rationale provided against every concern and criticism raised has been economic feasibility. Yet, the developer has never shown any numbers to support this claim. Moreover, economic feasibility and developer profit is not listed as a criteria for rezoning. Economic feasibility and developer profits is not a condition for a conditional use permit. Economic feasibility and developer profits is not one of the required factors for variances.

The design is a worst case scenario of aggressive/ steroidal development that might happen to any site. This project will harm the property values of the neighboring structure. So negative tax values..are to be expected. The saddest part of this is we all want development to happen, but this design is a shot across the bow. They intend to strip the code of any say on what can get built. I thought we lived by rules and laws designed to produce fair and just outcomes. The Summit Hill vote did not reflect the neighborhood sentiment. The SHA board was supposed to represent, as evidenced by the official public comment received (58% opposed), the feedback from the meetings (overwhelmingly critical), or the strong support for the Overlay shown in the recent survey. The changes do not begin to comply with Traditional Neighborhood design standards, and violate the intent and spirit of the EG overlay.

And all for luxury housing? If we throw away all the rules for luxury-priced housing, how can we ever expect developers to provide affordable housing--there is no incentive.

Thank you.

Jon Mason

Resident. St.Albans St. S.

Attachments area

[Preview YouTube video 695 Grand Ave Development](#)



From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: We oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies.
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:10:53 PM

rom: eeva savolainen <erksavolainen@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:09 PM

To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: We oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

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

To whom it may concern,

As former residents (we lived there for 8 years) at 9 St Albans my husband and I strongly oppose the proposed 695 Grand Ave development. It would ruin the character of the area and create a very difficult parking situation on that narrow one-way stretch. We support the East grand Ave overlay and the existing zoning rules.

Sincerely,
Eeva Savolainen and Kari Sundstrom

--

Eeva Savolainen
cell 651-261-0181

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixie's development
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:01:41 PM

From: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 1:58 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: FW: Dixie's development

From: val cohn <VALCOHN@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:13 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Dixie's development

I am disappointed in the Summit Hill Association's decision to approve the plan for Dixies. I believe this project is way to large and the impact on the surrounding area is devastating. It will loom over the beautiful old surrounding buildings and destroy the feel not to mention cutting off the source of light. It just is not in keeping with what I thought was in the plans for the future of Grand Avenue. The many variances that will be required is something you should really think about. A project that requires this is just wrong.

Please study this carefully and do not, I repeat, do not approve. There is a better way so that historic Grand Ave doesn't down the road have the density and look of Lake and Hennepin. Closer, look at St Clair and Snelling and the building behind My Zion. Those two buildings are out of scale also in my opinion. They are not in keeping with the look and feel of Grand.

Again, look at this carefully and do not let this monster of a building get built.

Sincerely,
Val Cohn
829 Lincoln Ave.

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From: [val cohn](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Dixie's project
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 12:28:54 PM

- I oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies.
- I am a Summit Hill resident homeowner frequent shopper on Grand, etc.).
- This project is too big and too tall, and it is out of character with our neighborhood. It will damage the neighborhood.
- I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules.
- I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules.

Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed.

Please review and don't let this happen. A better plan that complies with the original plans for the future of Grand Ave. The mere fact that there will have to so many variances tells you that this design is just to big.

Thank you. Val Cohn 829 Lincoln Ave.

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From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue/ Dixies Proposal
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:01:24 PM

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

From: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 1:58 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue/ Dixies Proposal

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

From: Margaret Gadiant <margaretgadiant@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 9:40 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue/ Dixies Proposal

I am a resident of the Summit Hill District and own a home at 809 Lincoln Avenue.

I am supportive of development on Grand Avenue within the framework of the zoning requirements that have been established.

I am, however, opposed to the proposed development on the Dixies site for a number of reasons. The size of the building is too tall and does not fit the character of the neighborhood. It does not provide for adequate parking for the residents of the proposed building, and also does not provide adequate parking for the patrons of the three businesses proposed. The traffic that this will cause will infiltrate the neighborhood. The service trucks that will be coming and going for this building will also cause traffic jams on Grand Ave.

Please do not allow the variances needed to provide for this development! As a past council member of the Summit Hill Association, I have worked with the city on parking issues and building proposals in the past. This development will be harmful to an Avenue which is currently going through challenges. Bigger does not mean better on Grand Avenue. Please insist that this development meet the zoning requirements currently in place.

Margaret Gadiant

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Proposed big box development for 695 Grand Avenue Opposition
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 2:01:13 PM

From: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 1:57 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: FW: Proposed big box development for 695 Grand Avenue Opposition

From: privateartmn <privateartmn@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 1:18 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Re: Proposed big box development for 695 Grand Avenue Opposition

Subject: Re: Proposed big box development for 695 Grand Avenue

Opposition to 695 Grand Avenue/ Dixie's proposed Development requesting multiple variances to current zoning restrictions

I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning regulations.

I am against the proposed development at 695 Grand Ave :

It is too big, too cheap and badly designed, not in keeping w the city zoning restrictions and most upsetting does not fit with the neighborhood's character and national preservation status.

It will ruin St Albans Street South forever and most destructive SET A BAD PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT on Grand Avenue.

This kind of copycat cheap

" accountant" designed building proposed by the developer is seen all over the suburbs and has in fact destroyed the charm and business interest of shoppers in

Uptown in Mpls where great businesses are moving out as fast as they can.

To be constructed from the same cheap materials as trailer homes, this proposed big box structure is clearly not appropriate to be placed (actually plunked -- requiring no site specific architectural design) in front of and next door to classic historic architecture on Saint Albans Street South.

St Albans Street's Clarence Johnson 1880 St Albans Row is a destination for travelers and neighbors alike. It is St Paul's most photogenic Street along with historic Summit Avenue.

Development proposed at 695 Grand will overpower and destroy the livability and most upsetting the irreplaceable vibe of this wonderful area and why?

Why would you want to destroy the timeless beauty and valued aesthetic of St Paul for cheap (illegal-proposed structure is against current zoning restrictions) big box development that does harm to what the city is known and valued for. I AM AGAINST IT.

Susan St John, Private Art
25 South St Albans St
Saint Paul, 55105
privateartmn@gmail.com
651.491.4431

I am a long time home owner, resident and a business owner of Summit Hill and Crocus Hill neighborhoods in Saint Paul

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue Development Proposal
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:44:11 AM

From: tess <tereszi.junge@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:38 AM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue Development Proposal

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

I am opposed to the development of the Dixie's/Emmetts/Saji Ya location as proposed.

I want to:

Strengthen and add to existing density and housing options at a compatible scale
Add housing density to grow and revitalize Grand Avenue
Strengthen and add to economic diversity of housing options Summit Hill
Support a mix of multifamily housing choices
Strengthen and add to economic vitality of Grand Ave, Summit Hill and Saint Paul
Support small businesses

I oppose:

New construction that fails to transition to existing areas of the neighborhood
Oversize structures that do not follow existing zoning codes undermine value of existing residences
New development that will alter the essential character of the neighborhood
Bringing in a building design better suited for suburban areas detracts from the unique character of the neighborhood
Establishing a precedent that leads to further projects that degrades the area's charm
Developments need to complement the eclectic nature of the area
The plans fail to protect the character of the Summit Hill neighborhood.

Please vote against the Dixie's/695 Project's requests to be given exceptions from existing zoning codes.

I want balanced development that respects the historic nature and character of the neighborhood.

Thank you.

Tess Junge
1157 Hague Ave, St Paul, MN 55104

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixie's Development Proposal
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 10:00:25 AM

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

From: Jeff Young <jsy99@10x-computing.com>

Sent: Monday, June 28, 2021 9:32 AM

To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Dixie's Development Proposal

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

Hello,

My name is Jeff Young and I reside at 753 Lincoln Avenue (1 block from the proposed development). I have lived in the neighborhood since 1986.

I am writing to say that I oppose the current application for 695 Grand Ave.

I believe that the character of the development is out of scale with the rest of the neighborhood.

The East Grand Avenue Overlay was extensively debated and ratified as the controlling document for the development of this area. I would support development which complies with that document. The current proposal requests zoning changes and many variances which are NOT covered in the overlay.

It seems that we are being picked to death with variances every time a new development is requested. Let's stop this practice. If we want to change the character of the neighborhood, then we should start the discussion between the residents and businesses.

I definitely support a vibrant Grand Ave, but within the context of the character which makes this area desirable.

Let me know if you need some clarification on my position or if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Jeff Young



EHANSEN@BURNSHANSEN.COM

Direct Dial: 952-564-6252

VIA E-MAIL

June 28, 2021

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

*Re: 695 Grand Rezoning & 695 Grand CUP with Variance
ZF # 21-271-810 695 Grand Rezoning
ZF# 21-269-061 695 Grand CUP & Variance*

Zoning Committee:

I write on behalf of concerned residents of the area surrounding the proposed 695 Grand Avenue New Mixed-Use Development (the "Project"). We learned that as part of the proposed development, there was a request to rezone the location, and obtain a conditional use permit and variance. In apparent recognition of the scale of the Project, and its requests for significant deviations from current requirements, the applicant now asks for its conditional use permit and variance request to be heard separately from its rezoning request. As the conditional use permit and variances are fundamentally connected to the rezoning, the requests should be heard in its totality at one hearing. My clients strongly object to File # 21-271-810 being held separately from File # 21-269-061 and request the applications be heard together on July 15, 2021.

Regardless of when the Project's applications are heard, my clients continue to object to the Project as currently designed. Although my clients would support a mixed-use development at the location, they do not support the scale and intensity of this development. A smaller structure would equally provide all of the benefits claimed in the developer's narrative and would reduce the negative impacts on the area. Moreover, a 3-story mixed-use project could be built by right, without rezoning, without a conditional use permit, and without any variances while also being consistent with St. Paul's Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, my clients respectfully object to the 695 Grand Avenue project as it is currently proposed and request you deny rezoning, a conditional use permit, and a variance.

I. 695 GRAND AVENUE PROPOSED PROJECT

The Project is a proposed New Mixed-Use Development at 695 Grand Avenue. The proposed project is a combined 153,854 square feet, with 123,353 square feet above grade, which includes a proposed main floor footprint of 30,210 square feet. The proposed project has a building height of nearly 60 feet. The application lists a lot size of 36,005 square feet, resulting in an apparent FAR for the proposed project of approximately 3.42. Setbacks for the proposed project include 8 feet on the north side facing an alley, 3 feet on the east facing St. Albans Street, 7 feet on the west, and 3 feet from the proposed restaurant patio on the south facing Grand Avenue. On all sides, balconies project beyond the building faces.

II. REZONING

The Project's massing, land coverage, and height would dominate the location and surrounding neighborhood. Indeed, the Project's aberrant design relative to the area is reflected by its noncompliance with current zoning and the East Grand Avenue Overlay District. For this reason, the Project has submitted an application to rezone from B2 (Community Business) to T3 (Traditional Neighborhood) without the East Grand Avenue Overlay. Because the Project does not meet the criteria to be rezoned, its requests should be denied.

1. The rezoning request is not compatible with land use and zoning of the property within the general area.

The City of St. Paul Zoning Code¹, the City of St. Paul's Comprehensive Plan ("2040 Comp Plan"), the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan ("Summit Hill Plan")², and the East Grand Avenue Overlay District ("EG Overlay") are the guiding documents for the proposed project and the surrounding area. The Project does not

¹ St. Paul's zoning ordinance was adopted for, among other things, the following relevant purposes:

- To promote and to protect the public health, safety, morals, aesthetics, economic viability and general welfare of the community;
- To implement the policies of the comprehensive plan;
- Encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city;
- To ensure adequate light, air, privacy and convenience of access to property;
- To provide for safe and efficient circulation of all modes of transportation, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle traffic;
- To encourage a compatible mix of land uses, at densities that support transit, that reflect the scale, character and urban design of Saint Paul's existing traditional neighborhoods; and
- To provide housing choice and housing affordability.

Sec. 60.103. The authority for zoning is "[f]or the purposes of promoting public health, safety, morals, and general welfare..." Minn. Stat. § 462.357, subd. 1.

² On February 15, 2006, the Summit Hill Plan was amended and adopted by the City Council.

comply with these guiding documents and would be a significant deviation for the area.

Summit Hill is primarily comprised of single-family residences with some duplex and 3-story multi-family housing also present. A business and commercial corridor runs along Grand Avenue, which includes the location of the Project. Under current zoning requirements for the location – B2 – the maximum height of a structure is 30 feet, or higher provided the structure is set back from all setback lines a distance equal to the height which said structure exceeds the maximum building height allowed. Sec. 66.431. Further, side and rear setbacks are required when walls containing windows or openings face interior lot lines. (Id.)

In addition to the St. Paul Zoning Code, the Project is also subject to the EG Overlay. *See* Sec. 67.601. Concerns related to significant deviations from the historic character of East Grand Avenue are precisely why the EG Overlay was implemented. EG Overlay was implemented following developers' exploitation of zoning loopholes and disregard for East Grand Avenue's existing character. Therefore, within the EG Overlay, maximum building footprints are limited to 25,000 square feet and a total above ground building size of 75,000 square feet. Building heights are limited to a maximum of three stories and 36 feet for commercial-residential mixed use buildings.

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

The proposed rezoning to T3 would permit a building height of 55 feet. The Project proposes a structure that is approximately 60 feet tall. The Project would literally tower over the surrounding area. The preexisting structures immediately surrounding the Project are 20 to approximately 45 feet shorter. The footprint of the Project covers approximately 85% of the existing lot with impervious surfaces. The Project has a building size 1.64 times larger and 1.66 times taller than what is allowed within the EG Overlay. In essence, the Project proposes a full project and 2/3rds at a single location.

St. Paul zoning ordinance requires the incorporation of existing city-approved plans in preparing any development plan for a T3 site. Sec. 66.344(a).³ The EG

³ Previous plans. Any pre-existing city-approved plans, such as small area plans, station area plans, precinct plans or master plans, prepared for the site or the surrounding area shall be incorporated as appropriate in preparing any development plan for a T3 or T4 traditional neighborhood district site. It is understood that these plans may occasionally be amended as conditions change. The intent of such plans shall be realized to the extent possible in any subsequent development plans.

Overlay is a city-approved plan found within St. Paul's zoning ordinances. Sec. 67.601. In developing the Project and proposing a T3 designation, the applicant did not attempt to incorporate the EG Overlay as required by St. Paul zoning ordinance. The height, bulk, and intensity of use clearly exceeds the building regulations of the EG Overlay and the required TN2 design standards. Sec 67.602. Rezoning the property to T3 would establish a use classification inconsistent with surrounding uses and create an island of nonconforming use within the EG Overlay. Such a zoning amendment would constitute spot zoning, which is an invalid act. *State, by Rochester Ass'n of Neighborhoods v. City of Rochester*, 268 N.W.2d 885, 891 (Minn. 1978). The Project's request to rezone should be denied because its use is not compatible with the land use and zoning required by the EG Overlay and would also amount to illegal spot zoning.

2. The property is suitable for uses permitted under the existing zoning classification.

Under the existing B2 and EG Overlay zoning, redevelopment to a mixed-use property is permitted. Sec. 66.421. The Project could be designed to be permitted under the existing zoning classification. Moreover, such a project would be supported by the Summit Hill Plan. "B-2 and B-2C zoning allows uses most appropriate to commercial activity on Grand Avenue." (G5a) The true reason for seeking to rezone the property is to build the largest Project possible to maximize their investment. The existing zoning classification is based upon the careful consideration of stakeholders. The Project's bottom-line is not a sufficient basis to rezone the property.

3. The Project is inconsistent with the trend of development in the area.

The Project is surrounded by residential properties, which are shorter, less dense, and consistent with the uniquely historic character of the area. Mixed-use development could be constructed in the area under the existing zoning classifications, which would match the context and character of the area. The Project's height, mass, and density is orders of magnitude larger than surrounding apartment buildings and would be an obvious deviation from the trend of development in the area.

4. The Project is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the plans for the area that have been adopted by the City Council.

As discussed previously, the Project is subject to the 2040 Comp Plan and the Summit Hill Plan. There is undoubtedly a tension between the desire to construct new mixed-use properties while also preserving the character of historic neighborhoods. The 2040 Comp Plan recognizes this, and it directs that a balance must be struck between preserving the historic neighborhood and new development

by considering the impact of the Project on the character-defining features of the area and the area context. 2040 Comp Plan Policy HP-16.

The abrupt change from shorter residential properties to the Property cannot avoid disrupting the area's overall pattern of architectural harmony and continuity. The Project's significant height and proposed solar orientation will cause maximum shadows to be cast on the surrounding properties. Additionally, the surrounding properties will have far less privacy as residents of the Project loom over them at heights not currently permitted. Neighboring properties will be left to deal with the consequences of a rezoned property not previously contemplated and that can only be built through a significant deviation from current zoning. Significantly, 2040 Comp Plan Policy LU-29 directs zoning action to ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition to those permitted in adjoining districts. The imposition of a significantly taller structure, when mixed-use development within the EG Overlay is limited to 36 feet, does not provide a transition to building designs in the adjoining areas. A rezone of the property should not be permitted for the sake of building the maximum number of luxury apartments.

The Project is also inconsistent with the Summit Hill Plan. The Summit Hill Plan explicitly discourages rezoning and variances in congested areas. "Rezoning and variances are opposed by SHA in those areas where parking and traffic problems create undue hardship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors." (G6) This area has intense use of on-street parking by current land uses. Rezoning of this parcel is not supported by the Summit Hill Plan. Moreover, the Summit Hill Plan expresses a goal of ensuring "that new and renovated mixed-use buildings on Grand Avenue respect the historic nature and character of the neighborhood..." (H9) Policy G10 supports the building size limits that became the EG Overlay district. Simply put, the Project is incompatible with the zoning classification within the traditional neighborhood and inconsistent with area plans. A legally sufficient reason to deny the Project's rezoning request is that it is "not appropriately scaled in light of the surrounding land use." *R.A. Putnam & Assocs., Inc. v. City of Mendota Heights, Dakota Cty.*, 510 N.W.2d 264, 268 (Minn. Ct. App. 1994)

The increased density and intensity of land use at 695 Grand Avenue would also not be in the best interest of the general welfare and safety of the community. The increased density and intensity of land use would strain existing sewer, water, parking, road, and public service infrastructure. The residential neighborhood will bear the burden of increased traffic congestion and parking demand. As a result, individual's safety will be at risk due to increased traffic and an inability to adequately clear snow during the winter. Decreased sight lines from minimal setbacks and increased traffic in the alley and neighboring streets risks the safety of pedestrians and bikers.

Furthermore, contrary to 2040 Comp Plan Policy LU-1, the increased density of the Project is not focused in an area with high existing or planned transit capacity.⁴ Grand Avenue is serviced by a single bus route, Route 63.⁵ With minimal existing transit capacity, but an increase in density, more personal vehicles will be used. Individuals who can afford to live in the Project's luxury apartments will likely have personal vehicles. This issue is particularly acute because the area already has high existing rates of car ownership. An increase in personal vehicles will exacerbate preexisting traffic and parking congestion and strain road and public service infrastructure.⁶ Bikers along the existing bikeways will be forced to navigate around additional traffic and parked cars. Pedestrians on St. Albans will be endangered by the blind exit located just three feet from a heavily used residential sidewalk.

Not only does the Project fail to promote the safety and welfare of the community and deviate from the existing neighborhood character, but it does not provide the housing the area needs the most. Goal 3 of the Housing section of the 2040 Comp Plan is to “[p]rovide fair and equitable access to housing for all city residents.” Further, the 2040 Comp Plan states a policy to “increase housing choice across the city to support economically diverse neighborhoods by pursuing policies and practices that maximize housing and locational choices for residents of all income levels.” 2040 Comp Plan Policy H-16. The Summit Hill Plan also promotes the retention of rental housing options and affordability. (H12)

Rental rates in the Summit Hill neighborhood average approximately \$920.00 per month.⁷ Monthly rental rates for the Project will range from \$1,400.00 for an alcove to \$2,750 for a two-bedroom apartment. Parking will be an additional \$175.00 per month. Additional market-rate rental properties do not address the real need and demand for affordable housing. Continued construction of large developments of above market-rate rentals jeopardize lower-density apartment buildings that exist along Grand Avenue and elsewhere in the neighborhood, which qualify as naturally-occurring affordable housing. Not only do they support and enhance the historical character and charm of the neighborhood, but they are also affordable compared to new developments. The Project risks placing upward pressure on rent within the area

⁴ Metro Transit has 14 routes defined as “High Frequency”—routes with no more than 15 minutes between trips; five of these service St Paul: Greenline LRT, A Line BRT, Route 54 on W 7th Street, Route 64 along Maryland Avenue, and Route 21 that connects Selby Avenue to Lake Street in Minneapolis.

⁵ Route 63 generally has a frequency of 20 minutes or more most days. During rush hour, the frequency is approximately 10-20 minutes. Stated another way, 77% of the time Route 63 has a frequency of 20 minutes or more.

⁶ The Project's Trip Generation Study optimistically expects 25% of residents will exit during peak morning hours.

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

and displacing less economically secure residents.⁸ More affordable housing near new construction are likely to have rents higher compared to similar housing.⁹ Even worse, allowing luxury housing to exceed all zoning limits will create enormous incentives toward the demolition of existing smaller multifamily housing, like the quintessential brick two-story apartment that provides much the affordable housing on and around Grand Avenue. The result is an economically exclusionary area that diminishes the diversity and vibrancy of the community. This Project is inconsistent with 2040 Comp Plan Policy H-45, which supports the preservation and maintenance of historic housing stock as an affordable housing option.

Because the proposed rezoning of the property is inconsistent with the development of the area or Comprehensive Plan, and does not advance the purpose and intent of St. Paul's zoning ordinances, the EG Overlay, and the Summit Hill Plan, the Project's request to rezone to T3 should be denied.

III. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

In addition to the rezoning of the property, the Project previously requested a Conditional Use Permit ("CUP") to allow for a 59' 10" building height and for proposing a building over 25' in height adjacent to RT2 (Townhouse Residential District) zoning. My clients are unsure if this request will change. However, it is worth considering the extent to which the Project is misaligned with the area. St. Paul Ordinance articulates the required findings for approval of a condition use as follows:

- (a) The extent, location and intensity of the use will be in substantial compliance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council.
- (b) The use will provide adequate ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.
- (c) The use will not be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety and general welfare.

⁸ Atticus Jaramillo & Chip Halbach, *Sold Out*, Minnesota Housing Project, October 2016, available at https://www.mhponline.org/images/Sold_Out_final_revised_small.pdf.

⁹ Anthony Damiano & Chris Frenier, *Build Baby Build?: Housing Submarkets and the Effects of New Construction on Existing Rents* (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Working Paper 2020) available at <https://www.cura.umn.edu/research/research/build-baby-build-housing-submarkets-and-effects-new-construction-existing-rents>.

(d) The use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

(e) The use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

Sec. 61.501

As discussed above, the Project is subject to both the 2040 Comp Plan and the Summit Hill Plan. Contrary to those comprehensive plans, the Project disregards the historic character of the area, does not provide affordable housing, and is not focused on an area with high transit capacity. Under either plan, the intensity of use proposed will not be in substantial compliance and this condition is not met.

Moreover, the use will be detrimental to the existing architectural character of the area and endangers public safety. The Conditional Use Permit is only required because the Project is nearly 20 feet taller than any surrounding structure and, in the event it was rezoned, would still exceed the height allowable under T3 classification. This is *prima facie* evidence the Project would be detrimental to the existing character of the area. Increased height would cast maximum shadows on surrounding residential properties and neighbors' privacy would be imperiled by residents and guests of the Project. The increase in height is presumably proposed so an additional floor of residences can be constructed at the location. The increased density and intensity of land use would further burden already stretched infrastructure. This would have a knock-on effect endangering the safety and general welfare of community members. This condition is not met.

The Project will also impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district. The introduction of a large building will impede the development because it will be an outlier zoned T3 in a historic area of smaller residential and commercial properties. This would lead to a race to rezone the area and construct equally large residential and mixed-use developments thereby destroying the orderly development of Grand Avenue as an area of historic, smaller buildings. It is clear based upon the surrounding zoning classifications and EG Overlay, which limits the size of mixed-use development, that normal and orderly development included limitations on the size and height of buildings. This condition is not met.

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

IV. VARIANCE

Assuming, for the sake of argument, the location is rezoned to T3, the Project previously required a variance for front setback from Grand Avenue. Further, it is our reading of the St. Paul zoning code that additional variances should be required for this application.¹⁰ For a variance, the following criteria must be met:

- (a) The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.
- (b) The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.
- (c) The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.
- (d) The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.
- (e) The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.
- (f) The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

Sec. 61.601

As discussed above, the Project is not in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code, nor is it consistent with the 2040 Comp Plan or Summit Hill Plan. Moreover, a Project of this scale will significantly alter the essential character of the surrounding area. Its height, bulk, and increased front setback would be a notable anomaly and interrupt the texture and flow of the adjacent blocks and

¹⁰ The City is also in receipt of a letter identifying other variance(s) that should be applied, including off-street loading requirements (63.400), as well as from the dimensional standards stipulating height and setback requirements for Table 66.331(e) along the alley and St Albans. Further, the proposal does not meet required Traditional Neighborhood design standards (66.343); these must be met "unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are circumstances unique to the property that make compliance impractical or unreasonable." (66.343). The most egregious departures from these required standards are from Design Standards 2 and 3, which require "careful attention to building height, scale, massing and solar exposure" as well as, on corner lots such as this, matching the establish building line. The U-shaped design with design with a northern "bottom" of the U located just 8 feet from the property line is particularly noteworthy as it does not evince "careful attention" to solar exposure.

neighborhoods. The Project would be an abrupt departure from the historic character of the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the Project cannot establish there are practical difficulties in complying with current zoning. Any variance request is not a result of the unique topography of the area or the Project's location relative to other constraining features. Rather, the developer has made a choice – a choice driven solely by economic considerations – to build a massive structure at this location with minimal setbacks and an outdoor patio area. Any plight of the developer has been created by themselves. Nothing precludes the Project from using the property for a mixed-use development which conforms to the zoning code and required setbacks. The Project, as currently proposed, is out of scale for the size of the lot and its location. Its construction would lead to potentially large negative impacts with regard to parking spillover into an already parking-challenged area, increased traffic, as well as blocking light/creating shadows across nearby properties due to its height and smaller setbacks. The driving force behind the Project's request is to improve its economic feasibility. This is insufficient. For these reasons, the Project's request for a variance should also be denied.

V. CONCLUSION

The Project proposes a mixed-use development at 695 Grand Avenue that exceeds what is permitted under current zoning classifications. Grand Avenue and the surrounding Summit Hill neighborhood was specifically zoned to maintain its uniquely historic character and vibrant community. Instead of incorporating itself into the community, the Project proposes a hulking structure that would impose itself on the community and change its essential character. The building footprint and height of the Project would be a clear outlier for the area. It should be noted, community members would welcome new mixed-use development along Grand Avenue. They are simply opposed to a Project that is an obvious deviation from currently existing structures, endangers the safety and welfare of the community, strains infrastructure, and appears driven solely by economic considerations. Promotion of the goals and policies set forth in the 2040 Comp Plan and Summit Hill Plan could be accomplished without the need to rezone the property. A three-story mixed-use development would be a more appropriate use of the land and would be more likely to conform to the existing zoning code or T2 zoning. Moreover, a smaller structure would provide more housing in a neglected segment of the housing market while providing a smooth transition to the surrounding residential neighborhood. The Project has not established the character of the neighborhood has changed to such an extent that no reasonable use could be made of the property in its current zoning. *Honn v. City of Coon Rapids*, 313 N.W.2d 409, 419 (Minn. 1981). As currently designed, the Project is counter to the protections in place to preserve this historic neighborhood and the safety of its residents. Because the Project has failed to

St. Paul Zoning Committee
Page 11
June 28, 2021

establish a basis for rezoning, a conditional use permit, or a variance, their requests should be denied.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik F. Hansen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Erik F. Hansen
Attorney at Law

EFH/DRR/md

cc: Client

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Ave Dixies
Date: Monday, June 28, 2021 8:55:06 AM

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

From: Nancy Kelly <nancydudleykelly@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 27, 2021 6:56 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Ave Dixies

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

We do not support the proposed project for the corner that is now occupied by Dixie's. We have lived in the neighborhood for the past 60 years. This proposed building will ruin the character of the neighborhood. It will pose dangers to pedestrians and cyclists. The project is too big and too tall.

Please do n to allow this to happen.

Nancy and Peter Kelly

From: [privateartmn](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Date: Friday, June 25, 2021 3:55:12 PM

I am very much against such a development in that area of Grand Avenue. It is too big, out of character for the neighborhood, and totally unnecessary. I think it would be damaging to the businesses that are already functioning very well in that area. A big ugly box cannot be an asset. It would also use up space which is well used now for those who live and shop there and in the general area.

Please do not build such a structure.

Sincerely,

Anne DeCoster
neighbor on Nina Street

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: Dixie's
Date: Friday, June 25, 2021 2:39:00 PM

From: Rosalyn Goldberg <blueskater3@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2021 2:25 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Fwd: Dixie's

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

sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us, Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us

I am forwarding a message I sent to SHA re: 695 Grand Ave.

Another thing to consider is developing our non-existent downtown. That is where large projects like this belong.

Thank you.

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

From: **Rosalyn Goldberg** <blueskater3@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, Jun 12, 2021 at 12:20 AM
Subject: Dixie's
To: ZLU Committee <ZLU@summithillassociation.org>

I am adamantly opposed to any rezoning or variances in relation to 695 Grand.

The developers knew prior to their proposal that their plans were non-compliant.

They had multiple opportunities to redesign to be in compliance. They are operating under the guise of "working with neighbors", yet they repeatedly ignore the "elephant in the room", which is height and mass ! Then, to add insult to injury, their last design was TALLER ! They obviously have no respect for the neighborhood. They want what they want. They said

*they could not make it smaller.
This is a load of crap ! They
keep referencing the building
on Oxford and Grand. That
building is also non-compliant. I
was around for that fight.*

*Those developers finally
compromised and made the
building one story shorter, and
implemented a wedding cake
design to "hide" the mass.*

*We can not have "spot zoning"
!!! Maybe all the properties in*

Summit Hill could all have their own personal zoning. This is ridiculous ! The overlay plan was designed to prevent this type of thing. Much effort, time, and research went into it. The recent Neighborhood Plan survey made it very clear what the neighborhood wants. It does not want T2/T3 zoning ! This is a historic neighborhood. It does not fit in. What happens down the road if this

building is sold ?

The developers kept saying Dixie's building was "old". This is laughable. I was walking in the neighborhood the other day and passed houses with signs on them saying, "Built in 1880", "built in 1893". No one in this neighborhood is buying the "too old" line. I am older than Dixie's building.

You must be very mindful of making decisions you can not

reverse !! This will change the neighborhood forever. As you know, there are other "developments" on the horizon. You can not "give one kid and ice cream cone and not the other". Other developers will want these exceptions, as well.

We are not University and Snelling, where two of these buildings are already going up.

Now they want to add three

restaurants and a retail space. You must imagine the traffic and parking issues this will create.

For those of you who live deep into the neighborhood, you need to know that living on Grand Ave is very different from living on Lincoln or Crocus Hill. I have spoken with my Lincoln neighbors many times over the years regarding this. It is like a totally different

neighborhood. Many renters have no off street parking. They will be impacted greatly. It will no longer be a "pedestrian-friendly" neighborhood. You can barely cross the street now. The traffic is already working its way deeper into the neighborhood. This project is totally disrespectful to the neighborhood. They CAN make the project smaller, they just

don't want their profits smaller. Follow the money...

Please do not "kill the goose that laid the golden egg".

What you love about Summit Hill will be destroyed. There are rules for a reason. The developers intentionally, and with full knowledge of the zoning laws created a project they knew from the beginning was non-compliant. How arrogant and insensitive ! Do

not allow Grand Ave to become Greed Ave. Please do not allow rezoning ! It won't stop there. It is a Pandora's Box. Please !!1 I love this neighborhood. Don't allow it to be destroyed. In addition, they mentioned "no guarantees" when it came to renting those "dream" spaces to chains. We have been fighting this for years. Mom and Pop's won't be able to afford to be on Grand. No one

is going to drive from Maple Grove to a neighborhood with no parking to go to Bed Bath and Beyond. They will come for the one and only Cafe Latte.

By the way, they did not include enough parking for all that is going into that building. They keep changing their tune. First they were not going to charge their tenants for parking, now they are. The employees of these businesses

will not be able to live there. Also, because the residential units are rental, they can jack up the rent anytime.

This oversized project is not what is good for the neighborhood. This is a selfish, disrespectful project designed to put money in the developers pockets.

SHA represents this neighborhood. The neighbors have spoken. It is your

obligation to deny the rezoning and variances. Please do not be bamboozled by their smoke and mirrors.

Please preserve this historic and wonderful neighborhood. Do not turn us into Uptown.

Thank you.

Rosalyn Goldberg

1023 Grand Ave., #6

(40 years a renter on Grand, worked at Estaban's in 1980)

I realize this was sent a few

minutes after midnight. I got home late, and I do not type fast. I did not even edit this, so I could get it to you on time. Please consider this when making your decisions. Thank you. Choose wisely.

June 29, 2021

OPPOSITION TO DIXIES/ 695 proposed project

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grand Place

Built in 1981, prior to East Grand Overlay District zoning

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

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

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

695 Grand would be:

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

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

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

From: nancy.ruppenthal
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Cc: luiserangelmorales@gmail.com; [Pereira, Luis \(CI-StPaul\)](mailto:Pereira, Luis (CI-StPaul)); [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](mailto:Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul)); [Noecker, Rebecca \(CI-StPaul\)](mailto:Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul))
Subject: Oppose 695 Grand Avenue Project -- Public Comment for July 1, 2021 meeting and all future meetings related to this project
Date: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 1:04:41 PM

June 28, 2021

Hello:

After submitting a previous letter to the SHA/ ZLU Committee, I was assured that the extensive negative sentiment toward this development plan will not be minimized or discounted as the proposal moves to the next stage in the process. I hope that will be the case.

During the months of discussion and revision, the pattern that I have seen is a parade of “revisions” that incorporate most recent complaints about design deficiencies and offenses, but delete some problematic design details that had been previously accommodated.

One example: When concerns about utility noise were stated several months ago, the developer indicated that all utility sound was being contained inside the building.

In the latest design, however, the electrical utility components were placed external to the building behind a small fence on St Albans at the alley. This, and other such inconsistencies, have added to the negative sentiment toward this proposal.

The large contingent of critics see the process as “rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic” because the vision that supports this project is flawed and inconsistent with the values it feigns to represent. Affordable housing ... not true even without hundreds of dollars on top of rental rates for indoor parking spaces. The so-called “Dream-space” ... holding the promise of culturally diverse business opportunities when the plan, allegedly, has been for a renamed version of Dixies to occupy that space.

This development plan would likely be seen as an invitation to dine, shop, and live elsewhere. It is too big, too tall, too demanding of parking and traffic levels. It simply cannot be accommodated in the 695 Grand Avenue venue and, therefore, MUST NOT BE APPROVED. PLEASE!

I do not understand Mr. Kenefick’s aspirations to leave a negative legacy after having been a positive contributor to our neighborhood for so many years.

PLEASE DO NOT SUPPORT THIS PROJECT!

**Respectfully,
Nancy Ruppenthal
24 St Albans South, #6
St Paul, Mn 55105**

June 29, 2021

St. Paul Zoning Committee
25 West 4th Street, Suite 1400
St Paul, MN 55102

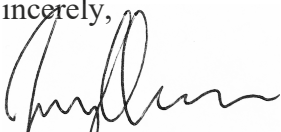
Dear Zoning Committee Members,

I am writing regarding the 695 Grand Avenue Development and Rezoning/CUP/Variance request to communicate my opposition to the plans and proposal as submitted.

My wife Whitney, son Calvin, and I were drawn to this neighborhood because of the blend of city culture and amenities with historical charm and scale. The current plans as submitted by the developer do not respect the historical nature or scale of this historic district and prioritize profitability of the business plan over compliance with the rules and regulations of this great city. The build height and scale are out of place in this neighborhood and threaten to irrevocable damage neighbors quality of life and infringe upon our rights . The shadow studies clearly show that the planned structure without setback or transitioning to neighboring residential scale as required under the established zoning requirements would cast my family home in shadows for a majority of the year.

I call upon the committee to protect and respect the rights of the neighbors and historic neighborhood and to reject these Rezoning and Variance requests.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Ordemann

Jeremy D. Ordemann
27 St Albans St S. #7
St Paul, MN 55105
+1-507-469-8194
jeremy.ordemann@gmail.com

Langer, Samantha (CI-StPaul)

From: S Mason <sonjalmason@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 7:07 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Public comment: OPPOSITION TO 695 GRAND PROPOSAL, SUPPORT FOR "MISSING MIDDLE" NEIGHBORHOOD DENSITY

Planning Commissioners,

I wanted to express my **strong opposition** to the **rezoning, conditional use permit, and variances** for the proposal for Dixies/695 Grand.

“Many cities over the past couple decades have introduced strategies, policies, and zoning to allow higher-intensity development, often transit-oriented, along their major corridors. The result has often been awkward, with five-plus-story buildings abutting single family homes, **which usually results in an outcry from adjacent neighborhoods**. Applying Missing Middle Housing is a great way to transition from these corridors into lower-scale neighborhoods.” -Daniel Parolek. *Missing Middle Housing*

This sounds all too familiar—outcry against too-big-too-tall-and-overly-encroaching proposals echo from neighbors all over St Paul these days. We need to embrace MMH for our neighborhoods and neighborhood main streets, like Grand Avenue. This will allow us to meet our Met Council goals to add more housing **and** preserve the character of St Paul’s many cherished neighborhoods.

I, like many neighbors, business owners and employees, and Grand visitors, object to the **scale, site planning, and intensity** of the proposal for Dixies/695 Grand. I want to emphasize that a mixed use commercial-residential at this location is appropriate, and even more importantly to this application, **a mixed use project is an allowed land use under current zoning**. Rezoning is not necessary. In fact, the entirety of the rezoning (etc) request is to increase the scale and intensity of the project.

The proposed intensity of this project is entirely beyond what the site and neighborhood context can support, and would have hugely detrimental implications. It is the desired large bulk of the building driving the application to leap past all zoning limits, and swell beyond the existing scale of the physical context. The tall height, minimal setbacks and poorly placed “stepbacks”, intense lot coverage, and backwards solar orientation cause it to encroach on privacy and cast shadows far in excess of the established norms, which will prevent the reasonable enjoyment of property by adjacent landowners. All of these adverse impacts are expressly caused by the increased intensity and building bulk that is being sought through rezoning, conditional use permits, and variances.

I would like to present the concept **Missing Middle Housing**, a planning concept cited and supported by the 2040 Comp Plan (p138). MMH is an appropriate lens to understand the level of intensity that would be appropriate to this site, and to the neighborhood. A scale that would support walkability, vibrant local businesses on Grand, and the retention and enhancement of our existing affordable housing supply and the economic diversity.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING & SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT

Missing Middle is defined as “house scale buildings with multiple units.” At its essence it is concerned the *scale of buildings*, not their *land use*. **Daniel Parolek *Missing Middle* concepts can, should, and must be applied to our neighborhood mixed use corridors, like Grand Avenue.**

Major corridors —University, Snelling, W. Seventh (“major arterials” and state highways) —are wider and have a different character than smaller neighborhood main streets (“minor arterials”) like Grand Ave. Major corridors have the highest existing and planned transit use and are where, per LU-1, the majority of density and growth should be directed. And yet, this project on a minor neighborhood arterial has higher intensity (by lot size) than most projects along University ([a](#)). T3 zoning exists at major intersections, like Dale and University, transitioning to lower intensity T2 at intersections with neighborhood side streets. In fact, even transit stop corner Victoria Station (intersection of University and minor arterial Victoria) is zoned T2.

[MMH](#) is focused on "Neighborhood Living, Not City Living":

"... many people prefer neighborhood living rather than city living, and five-plus-story buildings are too large for most neighborhoods. Missing Middle Housing is perfectly scaled to provide additional housing that fits in with the neighborhood character."

While Missing Middle Housing is indeed specifically about *housing*, it is not only about *stand alone* housing. Mixed use buildings are housing, too. Opticos calls them “live/work,” but the images below ([from MMH website](#)) illustrate the traditional housing-over-storefront-retail building typology we have along Grand, rather than an artist's studio —which I think is what many people imagine with the phrase *live/work*.

One page 261 of the *Missing Middle* book, Daniel Parolek introduces what he calls “Upper Missing Middle.” It calls for a maximum height of 3-4 stories, paired with limits on building widths and lengths. This is this MM type that is applicable to this site. He cautions:

MISSING MIDDLE CONCEPTS & ST PAUL'S ZONING CODE

In terms of St Paul districts, the zoning districts land use is specified by the letter and the intensity by the number. The “Level 2’s” are districts for neighborhood scale intensity: B2 “Community Business” (current zoning) and T2 (whose standards apply to this site thanks to the EG overlay). "The T2 traditional neighborhood district is designed for use in existing or potential pedestrian and transit nodes" 66.313. These are the appropriate top zoning for minor three-lane minor arterial streets like Grand Avenue. These districts are supported by the Summit Hill Plan (G5 G7 H7 H9), the EG Overlay itself, and by the 2040 Comp Plan, most specifically LU-29, LU-36 and H-47, which all emphasize compatibility in scale and sensitivity to context. The Level 3’s are meant for major arterial locations. B3, is "general business district is intended to provide sites for more diversified types of businesses than those in the B1 and B2 business districts, and is intended for use along major traffic arteries or adjacent to community business districts"; similarly, "The T3 traditional neighborhood district provides for higher-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented mixed-use development" 66.314. B2 and T2 are appropriate zoning categories for this site.

MISSING MIDDLE CONCEPTS & THE EG OVERLAY

The recommendations from Parolek's book actually sound a lot like what the EG overlay prescribes. MMH Upper Missing Middle: a maximum height of 3-4 stories, building widths 65-85 ft., building depth “deeper than missing middle zones”;

and it notes that this deeper depth is the primary difference between UMM and MM. EG limits: max height 3-stories, max foot print 25,000 and total building size 75,000. EG also applies design standards from Traditional Neighborhood districts (the T2 standards). One notable difference between MMH and EG, the EG overlay allows a larger footprint in concession to contemporary building norms, specifically parking garage podium standards. This is an incremental increase designed into the overlay to allow for modern construction practices while still respecting the spirit of the scale of the historic middle housing and mixed use.

[Incremental change](#) is an important component of MMH. At 1.7 the height of the tallest neighbors and 3.5 times the largest footprint neighbors, and 2.0 times the total square footage allowed by the EG overlay, the **departure from established norms by this proposal is monumental, not incremental**. In contrast, the 25,000 SF footprint permitted under EG represents an incremental increase from historic patterns. Moreover, this incremental increase is carefully managed by Traditional Neighborhood site planning design standards. These same design standards ostensibly apply to this proposal, but they are not being met. Most egregiously, residential transitions and attention to solar orientation—including prescriptive anti-shadow provisions requiring supplemental height limits and setbacks—are not met.

MISSING MIDDLE CONCEPTS & “JUST RIGHT” DENSITY

St Paul Comp Plan Appendix B gives a range of “target densities” for new projects of 20-75 units per acre along mixed use areas. It should be noted that this range is for all mixed use areas: which include primary corridors like University and Snelling and W 7th, as well as secondary neighborhood arterials like Grand, Payne, East Third, and Arcade. It stands to reason smaller streets should have the lower end of the range, and the wider, regional feeder corridor should reflect the higher end of the range. The same hold true for Neighborhood nodes; Snelling and University is a node as is Grand and Victoria, but the two nodes should have substantially different target densities. Finally, I wanted to note that Missing Middle does specify a “[goldilocks](#)” density of 30-50 units per acre (3); the lower end of St Paul’s “target density” would land in the MMH range. A *Guardian* article describes it as:

... the Goldilocks density: dense enough to support vibrant main streets with retail and services for local needs, but not too high that people can't take the stairs in a pinch. Dense enough to support bike and transit infrastructure, but not so dense to need subways and huge underground parking garages. Dense enough to build a sense of community, but not so dense as to have everyone slip into anonymity. (4)

An EG overlay compliant design would land exactly in 30-50 range, while the additional intensity requested would push this proposal far beyond it. It warrants observation that the expressed “goldilocks” range is residential density only, without consideration of the added intensity from the retail component. It stands to reason that the commercial portion of a mixed use project would result in a commensurate reduction in housing unit density to stay within the goldilocks range. The proposal has a dwelling unit density closer to 100, double “goldilocks,” plus the additional intensity from the retail. The lack of attention to neighborhood context shown by this proposal is even more frustrating to those of us living in MMH, because the example of what to do is quite literally right in front (and behind, and on the side) of this property. Context matters.

In Summit Hill, we are fortunate to have examples of “goldilocks” density, especially in the “Grandendale Node,” (a) which includes this block of St Albans Street South. This walkable, approachable density is accomplished through buildings with a range of heights (two-story, two-and-half story, three-story, and three-story-plus-garden-level) and with small and medium footprints. This mix of housing options in turn creates walkability and supports a variety of households at different income levels, two highly valued and defining characteristics of the Summit Hill neighborhood.

MISSING MIDDLE CONCEPTS & AFFORDABILITY

We want more housing, and especially more affordable housing, in St Paul. Missing Middle concepts are the best way to accomplish that.

The "affordable-by-design" component of Missing Middle (1) (2) bears mention, as it is in sharp contrast to this proposal for a luxury-priced rental community. Design decisions have been made in order to charge higher rents (9+ foot ceilings, luxury amenities like club and exercise rooms; why does the retail parking need to be costly structured parking?) which then have increased the building bulk. Allowing this project to rewrite the all the zoning rules for "market rate" apartments (with rents that start at \$1400 for a studio/alcove apartment) creates an anti-incentive AGAINST affordable housing. Moreover, studies have shown that luxury-priced housing causes displacement and rent increases in

CONCLUSIONS

The planning commission should deny this request.

T3 is incompatible with the Summit Hill Plan, incompatible with the existing EG overlay zoning, and incompatible with the St Paul Comp Plan. Granting this rezoning to T3 would be capricious and arbitrary.

The proposed land use of "mixed use" is currently allowed, rezoning is **not** necessary to make a reasonable use of this property. Planning goals cited in the Staff report (particularly LU-35) could be met, and would be better met, with a smaller scale project on this site. A mixed use project at smaller scale and intensity would meet LU-35, and, unlike the current proposal, would also meet LU-34, LU-36, LU-27 and H-47—which all underscore the importance of scale, compatibility and sensitivity.

It is only the economic interests of the landowner that drive the request for a larger, more intense building. Granting this rezoning to intensify this site only would be contrary to the public interest and damaging to the rights of other persons and property values in the neighborhood. Moreover, granting this application would amount to securing for the applicant economic benefits and rights that are NOT enjoyed by other owners in the same area, who are subject to EG overlay requirements as well as HPC limitations on their properties. The severe encroachment caused by reducing the protections offered by the current zoning district standards will damage neighboring property value and reduce reasonable enjoyment.

Thank you again for your time in reading my letter, and for your work for the residents of St Paul.

Sincerely, Sonja Mason

St Albans St S
St Paul Resident & Small Business Owner

Addendum: references and images

summit hill plan

G5 Neighborhood Focus for Commercial Uses. **B2 and BC zoning allows uses most appropriate to commercial activity on Grand Avenue.** Additional B3 uses are not appropriate for Grand Avenue. A zoning study should be initiated by the City to rezone B3 parcels that are currently used for B2 or less intensive uses

G6 Commercial Spillover. **Rezoning and variances are opposed by SHA in those areas where parking and traffic** problems create undue hardship for neighboring businesses, residents, and visitors. To help reduce commercial spillover effects on nearby property owners, the approval of site plans and licenses will include efforts to mitigate parking and traffic problems that are of serious concern to immediately affected businesses and residents

H7 Housing Density. **Ensure that the impact of any increased density conforms to zoning and building requirements**, and that the City considers the development's adverse impact on existing municipal services including, but not limited to, traffic and parking.

H9 Mixed-Use Buildings (Commercial Plus Residential). Ensure that new and renovated mixed-use buildings on Grand Avenue **respect the historic nature and character of the neighborhood**, as well as providing dedicated off-street or underground parking for residents and tenants.

H12 Housing Options. Maintain rental housing options to continue some measure of **affordability** in the neighborhood

saint paul 2040 comp plan

Policy LU-1. Encourage transit-supportive density and **direct the majority of growth to areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity.**

Policy LU-29. **Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition** to those permitted in adjoining districts.

Policy LU-34. Provide for medium-density housing that diversifies housing options, such as townhouses, courtyard apartments and smaller multi-family developments, **compatible with the general scale of Urban Neighborhoods.**

Policy LU-35. Provide for multi-family housing along arterial and collector streets, and in employment centers to facilitate walking and leverage the use of public transportation

Policy LU-36. Promote neighborhood serving commercial businesses within Urban Neighborhoods that are **compatible with the character and scale of the existing residential development.**

Policy H-47. Encourage high-quality urban design for residential development that is **sensitive to context**, but also allows for innovation and consideration of market needs.

Page 138 in the Housing section specifically references "Missing Middle"

(a) Please see "Missing Middle" slide show submitted to Summit Hill Association
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KQ_HrAIXmkFxcNNLNgLVy3hP-hoe74Db

It explains the Grandendale node, includes more analysis of the 695 Grand the site, as well as of the project design as submitted in March. Of note: The June design is 3.5 ft taller. It also has an example of the Hamline Station T3 project on University ; it is less intense with a shorter height, less lot coverage, much larger setbacks than this proposal. Hamline Station is just one example, there are several other recent projects with less intensity along University. Finally, there is an analysis of sensitive site planning by recent projects.

Missing Middle Images

Gallery of Live/Work





SUBSIDIZE



Links in notes

[MMH](https://missingmiddlehousing.com/the-missing-middle-affordable-housing-solution/)

<https://missingmiddlehousing.com/types/live-work>

<https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/housing/missing-middle-housing-daniel-parolek-duplex-fourplex-20200905.html>

<https://www.planetizen.com/node/46877>

<https://www.incrementaldevelopment.org/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/apr/16/cities-need-goldilocks-housing-density-not-too-high-low-just-right>

<https://shelterforce.org/2018/11/05/heres-what-we-actually-know-about-market-rate-housing-development-and-displacement/>

<https://inequality.org/research/luxury-development-making-housing-crisis-worse/>

<https://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/handle/1903/4205/umi-umd-4016.pdf;sequence=1>

From: [qwerty](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Re: i would like to share a video that is 4.35 min long.
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 2:05:38 AM
Attachments: [Dixies-695-Grand-&Alternative-reduced.pdf](#)

Dear Planning Commissioner:

Attached please find the pdf file I would like to submit to public comment. An earlier version of this was submitted as public comment to the Summit Hill Association, on three occasions, but it was not admitted to the public record. An earlier version of this as a video was also shared with the development team and this commission. As you will not allow the video to be shown I am submitting the attached PDF that shows the 695 proposal within the context of the neighborhood as still images. There is also an alternative design that has 47-54 units with 43 surface parking spaces and 72 underground parking spaces and has garnered support from many in opposition to the Dixies/Kenefick proposal.

The current version has been adjusted to match the plans and elevations that were submitted to the city on June 3. These images are true in scale and proportion to the design being submitted and the buildings in the immediate context. This new model reflects the increase in height that was added to the building as well as the minor adjustments to the configuration of the building mass such as balcony projections.

These images were made to show what the developers Reuter Walton, and the architects ESG and the landowner Peter Kenifick were trying to hide from being viewed. These developers are proposing a monster. The documents show the full size and scale of this building in context. Notably, images provided by the developer never show the entire building nor do they show it in relation to the neighboring structures. These documents show how massively out of scale this design is compared to the neighborhood.

At the halfway point, there is an alternative design. This design was presented in the spirit of compromise (it is four stories, not three) and has been presented to the developer team. Notably, this compromise design follows the spirit of traditional neighborhood design standards: particularly the required height limits, step downs and setbacks, solar orientation, and residential transitions.

The response I received from the developer was that the alternative design would be economically "unfeasible." Indeed, the only rationale provided against every objection and criticism raised has been economic feasibility. Yet, the developer has never shown any numbers to support this claim. Moreover, economic feasibility and developer profit is not a listed as a criteria for rezoning. Economic feasibility and developer profits is not a condition for a conditional use permit. Economic feasibility and developer profits is not one of the required factors for variances.

The design is a worst case scenario of aggressive/ violent development that might happen to any site. This project will harm the property values of the neighboring structure. So negative tax values..are to be expected. The saddest part of this is we all want development to happen, but this design is a shot across the bow. They intend to strip the code of any say on what can get built. I thought we lived by rules and laws designed to produce fair and just outcomes.

The Summit Hill vote did not reflect the neighborhood opposition. The board is supposed to represent, as evidenced by the official public comment received (58% opposed), the feedback from the meetings (overwhelmingly critical), or the strong support for the Overlay shown in the recent survey. The changes do not begin to comply with Traditional Neighborhood design standards, and violate the intent and spirit of the EG overlay

The Dixies proposal is not architecture for a site but more a financial product designed to enrich a select few developers .We want architecture that is designed like people matter.

On Tue, Jun 29, 2021 at 5:11 PM qwerty <jonmason659@gmail.com> wrote:

This is a public meeting...we are sharing with the committee and the public. If the developers are allowed to use visual aids it is only fair that we are allowed to counter their projections in kind. I don't frankly trust that anyone has viewed the video. I feel your strict meeting structure is a means to stifle speech.

On Tue, Jun 29, 2021 at 4:33 PM *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Hi Jon-

The Committee has already reviewed the video and they will be moving forward with only taking two minutes of testimony at tomorrow's meeting. The Chair of the Committee has instructed us in this way due to the large amount of public testimony we are expecting, and it is consistent with Committee public hearing rules.

Also, the meeting will be through Microsoft Teams, not Zoom, and the information to join in the meeting will be posted on our [website](#). Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Samantha

From: qwerty <jonmason659@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 10:46 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Re: i would like to share a video that is 4.35 min long.

How will viewing the video work with the zoom structure?

On Tue, Jun 29, 2021 at 10:23 AM *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Hi –

I have forwarded the email to our staff that will be participating in the meeting as well.
Thank you.

Samantha

From: qwerty <jonmason659@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 10:07 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: i would like to share a video that is 4.35 min long.

We made a 3d model of the 695 Grand Ave project using the developers scaled plans as well as scaled the building context. A full scale site model is the best way to see and compare the scale of this proposal in relation to the existing neighborhood. We then made a video to show the project and explain the conflicts we have with the design as well as constructive suggestions for improvement. I have sent each committee member a link to the youtube post. The direct link to the video is below as well as to the youtube link.

 [695 Grand Ave Development.mp4](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=za7YMzu02W8&t=26s>

Thank You.

Jon Mason- Resident, St. Albans St. S .

This video is a response to
the proposed development
at Dixies/695 Grand Ave.

An aerial architectural rendering of a city block. The central focus is a large, white, multi-story building with a flat roof and a central courtyard area. The building is surrounded by other multi-story buildings in various colors (brown, grey, red) and styles. The streets are labeled with names like 'Albany Sts', 'Grand Ave', and 'Smyth Sts'. There are trees, green spaces, and cars visible on the streets. The overall scene is a detailed urban environment.

The white form is a true to scale representation of the proposed building.



The 3d model was built by a professional model maker using the developer's published plans.



The adjacent buildings were measured and modelled true to scale.

Play (k)



0:22 / 4:39





The building ignores the East Grand Overlay District zoning requirements.

No effort to transition or blend to residential neighbors.



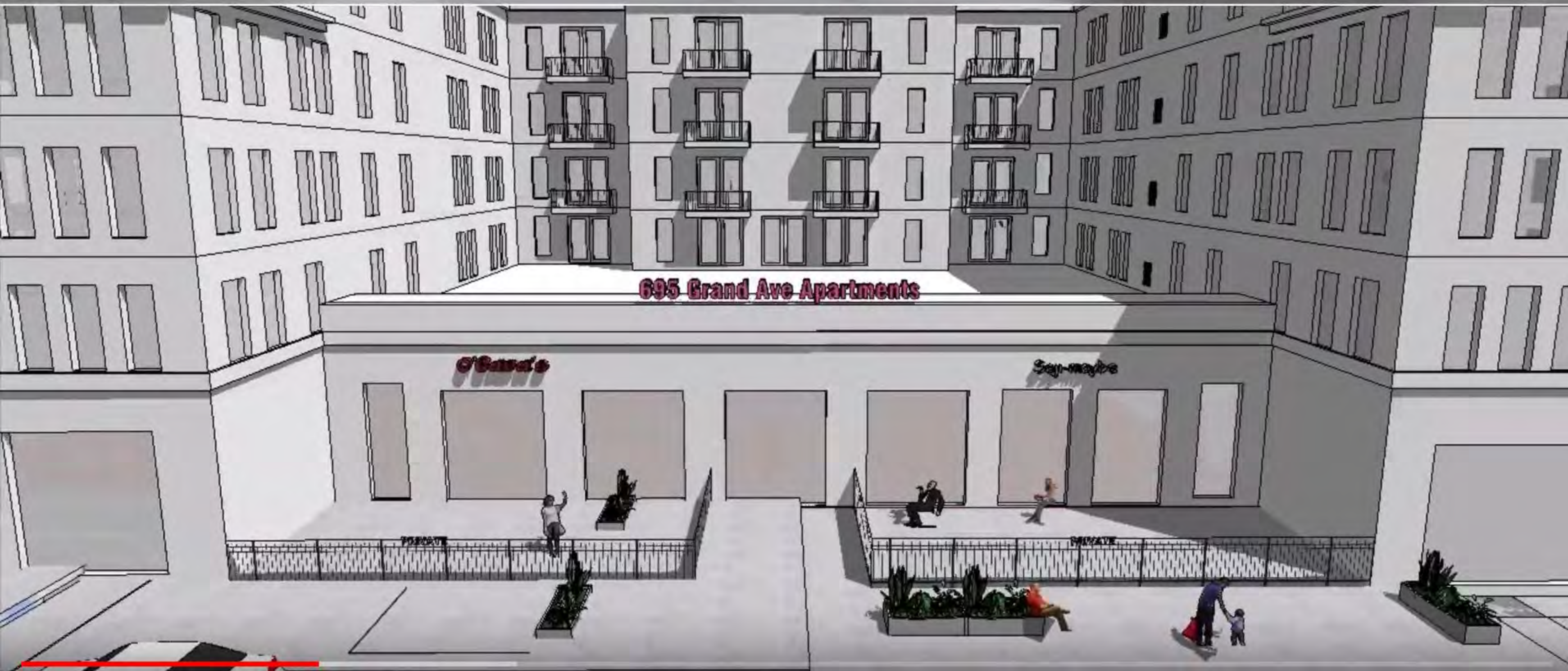
Building is 1.7x taller than allowed, but still has a one-story building expression on Grand (which is discouraged by Traditional Neighborhood design standards.).



Building is 1.7x taller than allowed, but still has a one-story building expression on Grand (which is discouraged by Traditional Neighborhood design standards.).



Private space is not public "open space".



Alcohol served = fence.



"Junkspace is like being
condemned to a perpetual
Jacuzzi with millions of your
best friends." -Rem Koolhaas



Dangerous blind exit.

TEMPORARY PARKING ENTRANCE ONLY
ALL OTHERS EXIT ONLY

WITHDRAW
GAS
CARTAGE

WARNING
CAR
ENTERING



Disregards the St Albans
Street setback.
No meaningful effort to
transition heights.





Largest building bulk is along the North, closest to residential neighbors.



64 ' tall wall x 230' wide,
with balconies projecting beyond the building edge

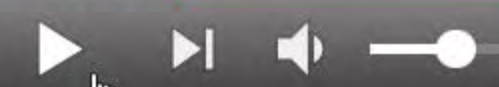
No meaningful effort to transition heights or provide setbacks to alley.
No sun in winter = ice alley glacier. Hazardous.





Dec. 21 noon.

Play (k)



2:05 / 4:39





The following concept was developed with Missing Middle scale, but
also with the spirit of compromise toward the Dixie's proposal

▶ ▶ 🔊 2:23 / 4:39

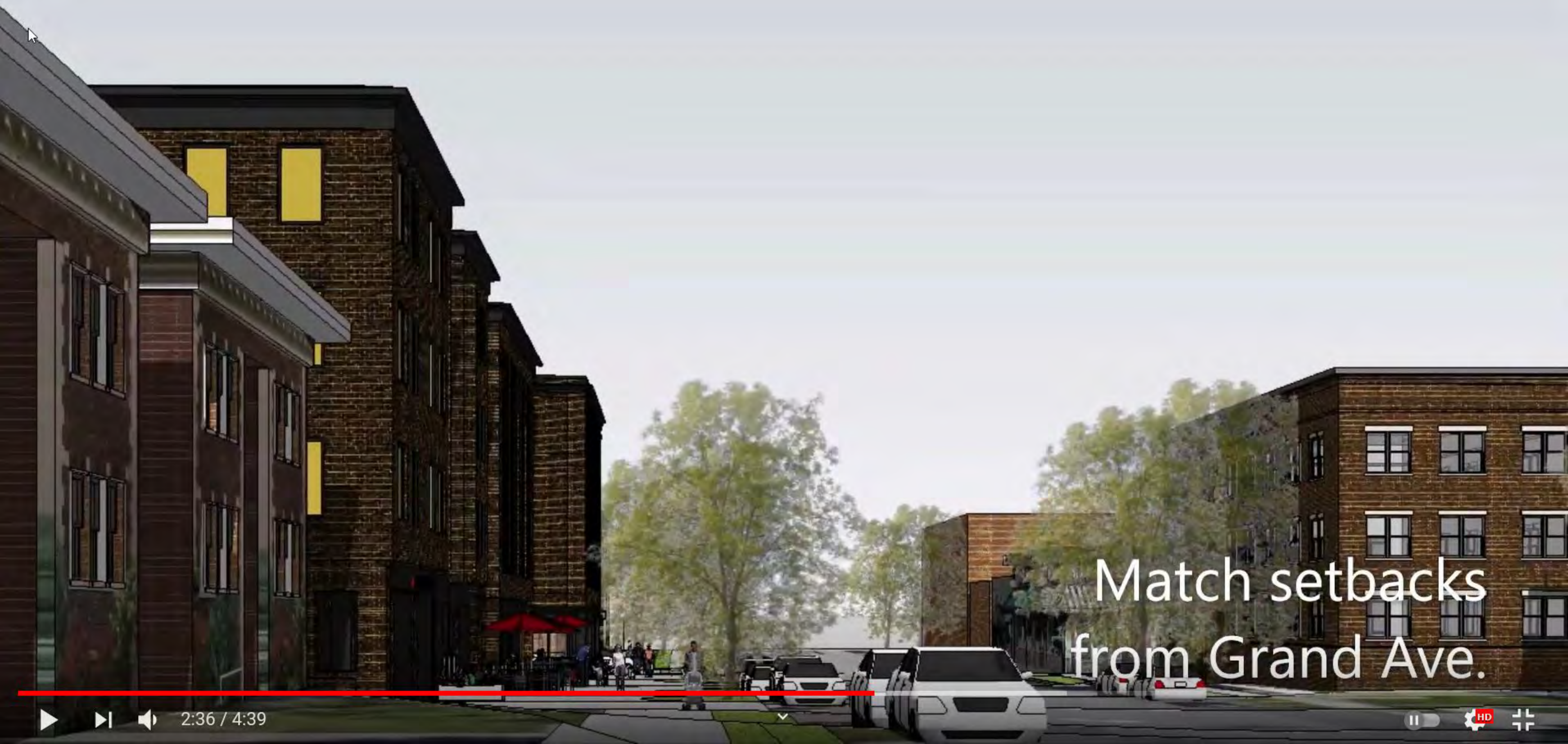




This is an alternative design for 695 Grand Ave.



Match setbacks
from Grand Ave.



Match setbacks
from Grand Ave.

Designed to look like multiple buildings.
Heights step down with the natural hill



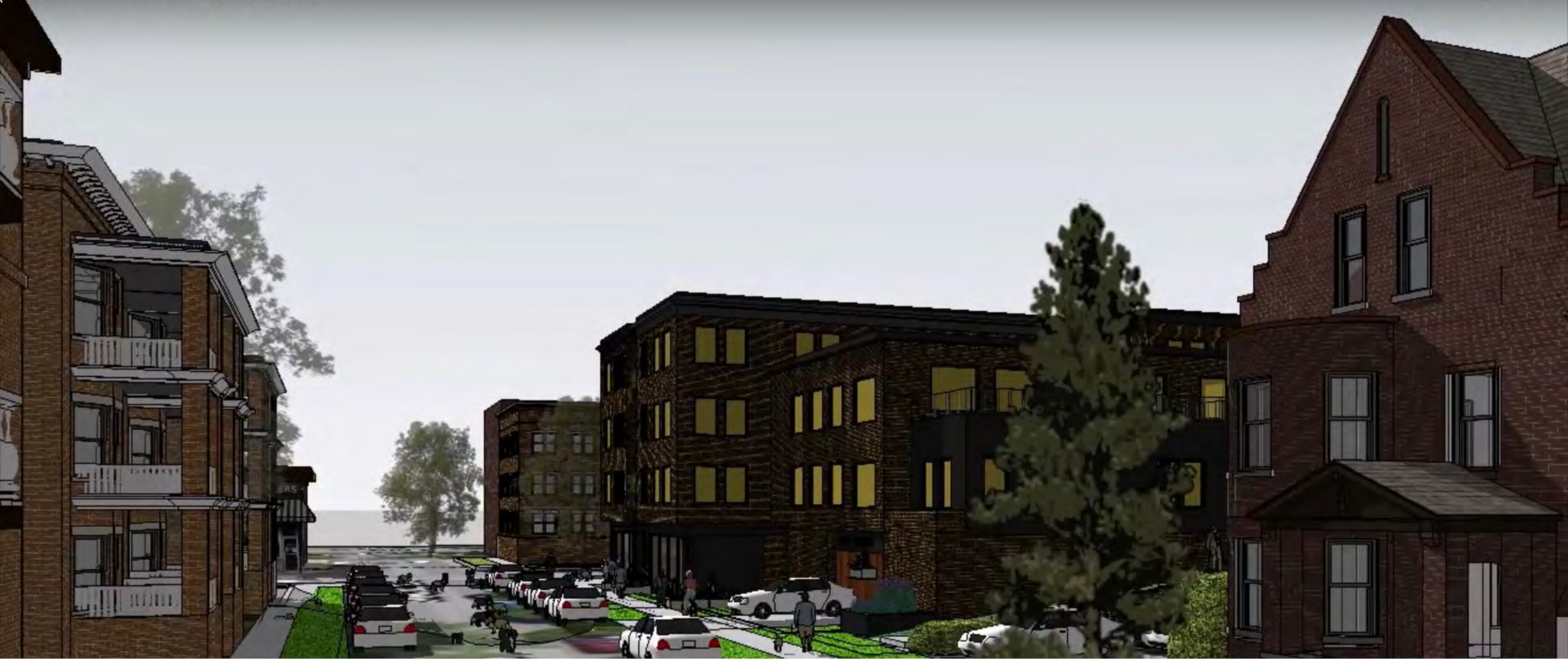
The building connects to St. Albans
with complimentary proportions in height and width





Building steps down and back.





Vehicle exit is set back from sidewalk a full car length for safety.



3:29 / 4:39



Residential
Transitions:
12/21 Winter
solstice max
shadows: sunlight
still reaches
neighbor's 1st level
windows at noon.



Higher density at compatible neighborhood scale.
This is Missing Middle.



The placement of the building creates open space with sunlight.

Courtyard over covered parking is accessible from street, creating a park-like space for yoga, art classes, play area or dog exercise.

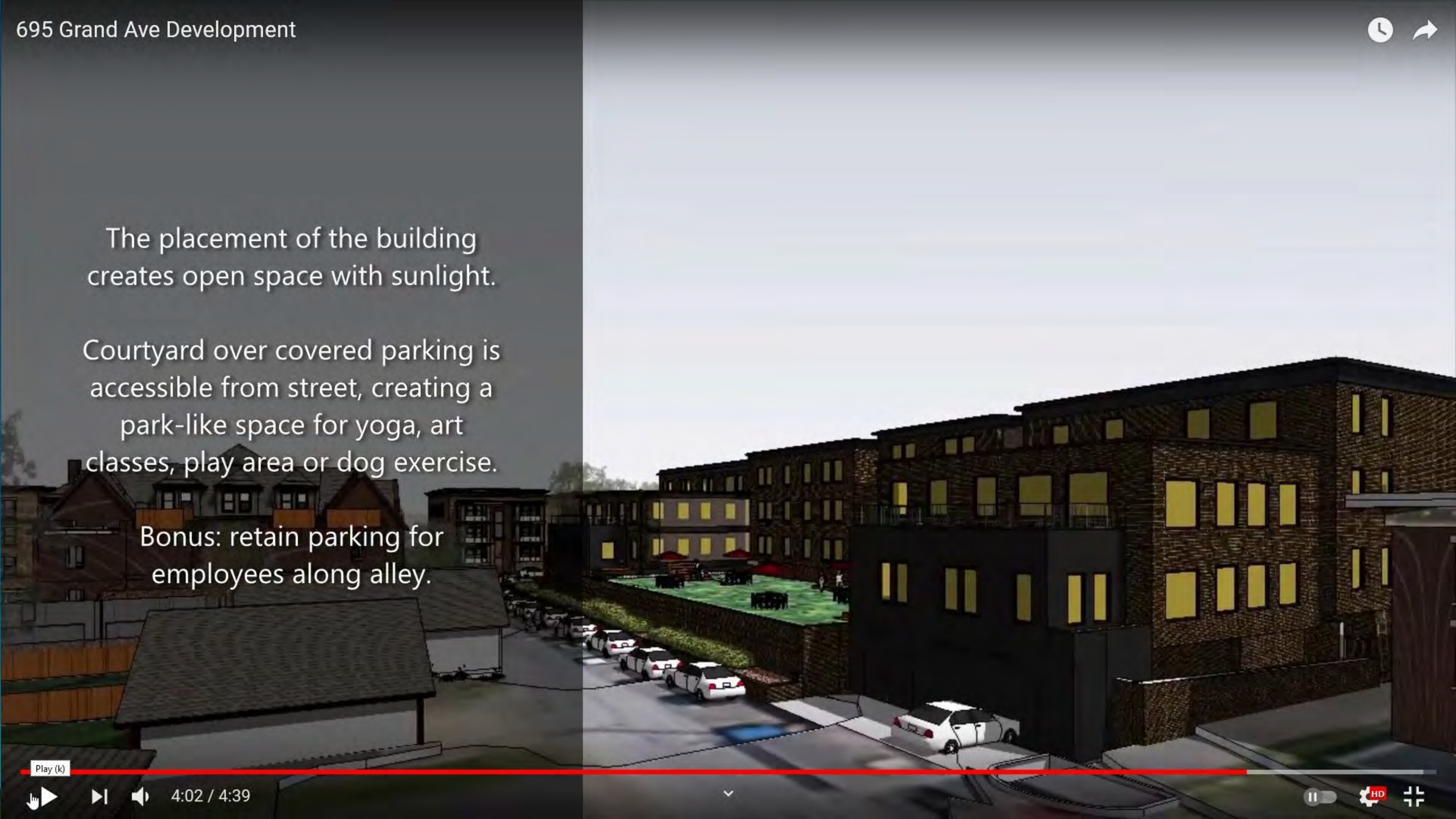
Bonus: retain parking for employees along alley.



The placement of the building creates open space with sunlight.

Courtyard over covered parking is accessible from street, creating a park-like space for yoga, art classes, play area or dog exercise.

Bonus: retain parking for employees along alley.



Careful attention to solar impacts through height transitions and building placement mitigate adverse impacts on neighbors







More housing. Compatible neighborhood scale. This is Missing Middle.

Prepared by
Friends of A Better
Way St Paul

From: [privateartmn](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary; brianwenger24@gmail.com](#)
Subject: FW:
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 8:15:31 AM

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: privateartmn <privateartmn@gmail.com>
Date: 6/30/21 8:11 AM (GMT-06:00)
To: LORI BROSTROM <lbrostrom@comcast.net>
Subject: FW:

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: privateartmn <privateartmn@gmail.com>
Date: 6/30/21 8:08 AM (GMT-06:00)
To: grtodd@comcast.net
Subject: FW:

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: privateartmn <privateartmn@gmail.com>
Date: 6/28/21 12:04 PM (GMT-06:00)
To: rebecca.noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Subject:

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: privateartmn <privateartmn@gmail.com>

Date: 6/28/21 11:08 AM (GMT-06:00)

To: rebecca.noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Subject:

Please find the letter below outlining our neighborhood protest of the development plans for 695 Grand Avenue and the implications of this kind of development for the future of Grand Avenue as a vibrant neighborhood and small business center in St Paul.

With personal views.:

The unprofessional treatment and the skewed outgoing public notices and statements and pre-planned decisions that we--protesting neighbor/residents- have witnessed and received from the leadership of the SHA are not representative and do not reflect the overall views of the majority of Summit and Crocus Hill residents.

This is disturbing. We have documented and recorded this leadership bias and observed ongoing unprofessional action re this project as we support and advocate for the missing middle and appropriate scale in the proposed development.

As citizens of Saint Paul and friends promoting and supporting this beautiful city and its authentic quality of life, we expect and deserve and need unbiased representation and unbiased, in depth professional study undergirding the planning and decisionmaking regarding zoning and land use decisions for this very important part of Saint Paul and all of the city. Its future livability and timeless value are at stake. This is critical for all of us as change is in the forefront for America's cities and our future.

Respectfully submitted as citizen neighbor and business owner....

Susan St John,

privateartmn@gmail.com

651.491.4431

25 South St Albans Street

Saint Paul

To: Peter Kenefick

VIA EMAIL

cc Summit Hill Association, Ari Parritz

RE: 695 Grand Proposaler below

We are writing to express our objection to the complete disregard you have shown for feedback from the neighbors. We expressed concern regarding the scale of the project, and you have returned with an **even taller building**. You **increased the ceiling heights on the main floor and**

for the penthouse, so now the building height is 59' -10" instead of 56'-8" to the top of the fifth floor roof). The first floor does not adjust for the hill, so the height at the corner of Grand and St Albans the building will be 3'-6" higher, rising 64'-4" from the sidewalk, just a person's height (5'-8") shy of **double the height limit**. We would welcome a mixed use development that would enhance Grand Avenue and Summit Hill, but this **proposal will severely alter the essential character and damage the livability, and harm the property values, and the locally designated historic district located across the alley**. Moreover, there are no practical difficulties preventing compliance with the zoning code. There are no unique circumstances or hardships caused by this large, evenly sloped parcel. This proposal is clearly and grossly **out of scale for the size of the lot and its location**.

We are a group of neighbors who have met and had many discussions in these three weeks since the first meeting. We represent our "Block Club" –households with frontage on the one way stretch of St Albans (both sides) as well as on the "shared alley" block bounded by Grotto-St Albans-Summit-Grand. It's a "one and a half block" sized block club. Our block club has had input from homeowner, renter, multi-generational, and co-housing households. Our block club includes varied household types: traditional 2-story and 3-story multifamily flats, a modern 4-unit multifamily with an elevator, converted mansion multifamily, townhouse, carriage house (with windows right on the alley), single family, duplex. The dominant form is multifamily. We have had three meetings: two outdoor socially distant meetings and a zoom meeting to increase our reach. We have had robust discussions on the sidewalk and in the alley, as well as on the computer via shared online tools and polls.

We can't in this letter fully summarize all the issues expressed. But we can convey the dominant themes.

The biggest concern and criticism of this proposed design center on four areas: building bulk and form, negative impacts on the neighborhood, lack of compliance with existing zoning rules and regulations, and market concerns.

Among those, the underlying, most repeated concern is the building size and form. And, it bears emphasizing that **the too-large scale** (extra tall height combined with near complete lot coverage) **creates or contributes to all the other problems**.

If there can be one overarching recommendation it is this: **the project should be scaled to match the neighborhood**, within the zoning requirements including the East Grand Avenue Overlay district requirements.

Thank you for time and consideration

SAGGS Block Club

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

From: [June Ofstedal](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Oppose 695 Grand Avenue Proposal, please submit to public comment
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:41:52 AM

Dear St Paul City Planning Commission,

I'm writing to express some of my many concerns regarding the proposed 695 Grand Ave development. I've lived on St Albans between Summit and Grand for the past decade, and while I was initially happy to hear of a new multifamily residence in the Dixies lot, I have many reservations with this plan.

First, I fear that the scale of the project, and the number of units and new residents, is too large given the current parking and public transit infrastructure of the area. Through junior high and high school, and during my breaks from college, I relied on the 63 bus on Grand and the 65 bus up Dale to get home from school after club meetings, to visit friends, and to go to work. As much as I appreciate these busses, they run far too infrequently, and are far too prone to delays, to be considered reliable and attractive transportation options for residents of the new building. Using either of these lines to connect me to the Green Line to a job I had in downtown Minneapolis took between 45 minutes and an hour one way, while the drive was 15-20 minutes.

I realize that most residents and visitors of the proposed development would commute by car - a quick drive down St Albans between Summit and Grand shows that street parking is already usually full, and with street parking on both sides of St Albans, it can be difficult to even get down the street in the winter. Turning left onto Grand, or even going straight, can require several minutes' wait during rush hour.

I truly believe in the importance of multifamily/higher density residences, but I feel like the proposed development is motivated by profit, not by a genuine care for the neighborhood or for potential new residents. As a recent college graduate living at home for the time being, I am thrilled by the idea of more affordable housing in St Paul, and I would certainly welcome more young people, and people of more diverse socio-economic backgrounds, to the neighborhood. However, I've seen the proposed prices of these units, and of the underground parking spaces, and they're so high as to be prohibitive to many. I'm tired of hearing developers evoke the ideal of more walkable, accessible, diverse neighborhoods to justify projects motivated simply by profit.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope you will take my concerns into consideration.

June Ofstedal
24 Saint Albans St S
Saint Paul MN 55105

From: [Denise Aldrich](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary; ZLU@SummitHillAssociation.org](#)
Subject: comments on proposed 695 Grand Ave Dev't
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:48:32 AM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my opinions on the proposed development at 695 Grand Ave.

For the record, I am a member of the Summit Hill Association Board of Directors, but the comments contained herein are my own personal comments and do not reflect the views of the Board.

1. **I am strongly opposed to allowing the property to zone out of the E Grand Avenue Overlay District (EGAOD).** It sets a bad precedent to allow individual property owners to decide to opt-out.
2. **I am opposed to rezoning the property to T3.** The standing Neighborhood Plan specifically states that the area should NOT rezone to B3/T3.
3. **I support the application for the height and set-back variances.** Despite the above, I support this project as currently designed. (I believe the developer could have gotten to the same results asking for variances from the EGAOD.)
 - a. **The requested height is not completely out of character with the neighborhood.** Since this project began, I have done a lot of driving around the neighborhood. There are several historic buildings that are 3, 3.5, and 4 stories. There are some that are 3.5 that are set up on an 8-ft hill. The effect of a 3.5-storey building on a 8-ft hill is the same height as a 4.5-storey building.
 - b. **The U-Shape of the proposed building echoes historical buildings in the neighborhood.** Just northeast of 695 Grand Ave is a 3- or 4-story U-shaped residential building. And my favorite example is the Commodore, which measures in at 7 stories. The U-shape, with the outdoor dining space and terrace for residents, is an appropriate and welcome addition to Grand Ave.
4. **Opposition to this project seems to be concentrated among those who live closest to it.** I plotted an approximate map of all the listed address of public comments that were received at SHA by June 18. Those who support the project are indicated by a green dot; those opposed have a red dot. Close to the project, almost all of the dots are red. Once you look at residents who live 2 or more blocks away from the project, the dots shift to a majority of green/support.

What comes up in conversations over and over again, is that everyone who lives in this neighborhood does so because of the proximity to Grand Ave with its shops and restaurants. Grand Ave. is an essential part of this neighborhood and the proposed new development—retaining excellent restaurants and a local owner—will be a welcome update.

Regards,
Denise Aldrich
1053 Linwood Ave
St Paul MN 55105

773 Goodrich Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
June 30, 2021

Planning Commission
Department of Planning & Economic Development
Zoning Section
1400 City Hall Annex
25 W 4th St.
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1634

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

I OPPOSE THE GRANTING OF A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR 695 GRAND AVENUE

I oppose the conditional use permit until a comprehensive and independent traffic study is conducted for the project.

I have lived at 773 Goodrich Avenue for 30 years. I am a past president of the Summit Hill Association and of the Ramsey Hill Association. I am a past chair of the city's Heritage Preservation Commission. I have always thought of the HPC as a sister commission to the planning commission. Like the planning commission the HPC is charged with applying explicit, written criteria. We on the HPC learned through hard experience that it was dangerous to substitute personal opinion for those criteria. We did not want to damage our credibility with either the public or the city council. Nor suffer defeat in litigation.

I sometimes wonder if the developer -- and certainly its traffic consultant -- has spent much time on Grand Avenue. If they had, they, like Summit Hill residents and business people, would have seen:

- Pedestrians skittishly crossing from one side of Grand to the other;
- Spontaneous memorials to pedestrians who did not make it;
- Semi-trucks illegally using the turning lane as a parking lane;
- Delivery vans, like Amazon, double parking -- "just for a minute" -- and backing up traffic for a block.
- St. Alban's becoming an icy path barely a car-width wide (I run St. Alban's several times a week, summer *and* winter.)

Rather than continuing I am including three photographs. They are worth several thousand additional words.

From: [Pj Bensen](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Fwd: vote No to 695 Grand Proposal
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 10:56:01 AM
Attachments: [attachment 1.pdf](#)

Please add the email and attachment to the public record.
Thank you.
Pamela Bensen

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: PJ Bensen <pjbensen@gmail.com>
Date: June 29, 2021 at 10:33:42 PM CDT
To: cedric.baker@gmail.com, adejoy@esndc.org,
kristinemariongrill@gmail.com, nmhood@gmail.com,
luiserangelmorales@gmail.com, jake.reilly76@gmail.com, Usstmc@gmail.com,
simon.taghioff@gmail.com, aquanettaa@gmail.com,
tramhoang.sppc@gmail.com, blindeke@gmail.com, gmcourtrey07@gmail.com,
k.mouacheupao@gmail.com, aperryman@genesysworks.org, mieeta@gmail.com,
jeff.risberg@gmail.com, wendylunderwood@gmail.com,
zhijun.yang@metrostate.edu
Subject: vote No to 695 Grand Proposal

Hello-
I'm a long time resident of this community. I initially came here as a renter roughly 10 years ago, and have now owned three different condos/homes in the area. This proposed project is unacceptable and is not compatible with what drew me to the Summit Hill neighborhood.

The future of our neighborhood depends on your vote to DENY the application to rezone. Please see attached document for more detailed objections, and make it a part of the public record.

THANK YOU-

Pamela Bensen
682 Summit Ave.
St Paul MN 55105

Sent from my iPad

Re: Dixie's Development Proposal

I. Introduction

The City of Saint Paul, the Summit Hill Association and the Grand Avenue Business Association have spent years studying this neighborhood, this business district and they have compiled thoughtful, comprehensive policies to protect this unique neighborhood, promote business development, and address situations like this.

The property at issue here – 695 Grand Avenue – falls within several pre-existing zoning and overlay districts that control this decision-making process. The proposal envisions a five-story mixed use building, with retail on the first floor and 80 apartment units on the top floors. They plan for 99 enclosed parking stalls. The proposed square footage of the project is 151,000.

This project **does not** comply with the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan and **does not** comply with the Summit Hill Association endorsed and St. Paul City Ordinance ([67.600](#)) for the East Grand Avenue Overlay District (“EG”). As a result, to accomplish this project, the owners seek to change the B2 zoning to T3 zoning and to request a rezone out of or variances from the East Grand Avenue Overlay District (“EG”).

This proposed development, and the consequential zoning and variance decisions, will have implications and precedence for future development up and down Grand Avenue for the next 100 years. Much care and discretion must be exercised in reviewing this proposal to ensure that it complies with the laws and existing community endorsed plans. Of relevance are pronouncements by the City of St. Paul Zoning Code, the City of St Paul’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan (“2040 Comp Plan”), the Summit Hill/District 16 Neighborhood Plan (“Summit Hill Plan”), and the East Grand Avenue Overlay District (“EG”) and the affirmation of the EG in the most recent community survey conducted by the Summit Hill Association.

This project literally complies with none of these guiding documents and is a monumental departure from the character of the neighborhood and Grand Avenue that the Summit Hill Board is to preserve. To approve this project would mean the Planning Commission/Zoning Committee would be disrespecting the fundamental governing principles that the residents expect their representatives in the City of St. Paul to uphold.

To be clear, I am very much in favor of development, but not development that seeks to disregard the guiding principles we have all agreed to for this neighborhood. The project proponents have been excellent in working with the neighborhood to explain their project and make accommodations. That does not mean the project should move forward when it is fundamentally and clearly inconsistent with the guiding principles of this neighborhood as codified in the Summit Hill Plan and the EG.

II. The Proposed Project Does Not Comply with Zoning Requirements

Currently, the relevant property is zoned B2 with EG applied. This designation permits mixed use development with a maximum height of 30 feet.

- *The proposed building is much higher at 60 feet.*
- *The setback criteria are not met from adjacent RT2 residential districts*

The Summit Hill Plan promotes the zoning of B2 sites. T2 is a parallel zone for commercial properties and is supported in the Summit Hill guidelines. The Summit Hill guidelines curtail the use of B3 and its parallel T3 zoning; in fact, the policy states that no additions of B3 zoning should be approved. Summit Hill guidelines also provide that B3 properties should be re-zoned to B2 zoning when such properties are developed for B2 uses.

- *The proposed building needs T3 zoning as it is not allowed in B2 and T2.*

This property lies within the EG. EG is designed to preserve the historic character of East Grand Avenue. This zoning overlay district was the result of a recommendation that was incorporated in the current Summit Hill Plan and was a reaction to and repudiation of the Oxford Hill Condominium development at the corner of Oxford and Grand Avenues. Many residents felt Oxford Hill was too tall and too massive. As a result of what happened with the Oxford Hill building, the code further specifies that there will be no additional heights allowed for setbacks. The maximum building footprint to be no more than 25,000 square feet and the total building size, above ground, of 75,000 square feet. This recommendation was approved by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2006 and was incorporated into the **City of St. Paul Zoning Code** Article VI, 67.600. It limits mixed use building heights to 36 feet. There is no additional height allowed for setbacks. There are no parking exceptions allowed.

- The proposed building **is double** the allowable size at 151,000 square feet and 33% larger than the footprint of Oxford Hill (CVS and Starbucks building) and 25% taller than the same Oxford Hill.

III. Because the Project Does Not Comply with Zoning Requirements, the Owner Asks for Multiple Exceptions in the form of Rezoning AND Variances – None of Which Meet Standards for These Exceptions

Change of Zoning

Because the project fails to meet the well-thought plans set forth by the City and Summit Hill, the owners/developers of 695 Grand propose changing the B2 zoning to T3 (“Traditional Neighborhood”) zoning and request a rezone out of the EG.

For a situation such as this, the City of Saint Paul has established project design standards (Sec. 66.343) that take precedence “unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are circumstances unique to the property that make compliance impractical or unreasonable.” The developers have

failed to meet this burden. In particular, this proposal fails to transition to the density in this area. The policy states that “Transitions in density or intensity shall be managed through careful attention to building height, scale, massing and solar exposure.” ([66.343 \(b\)\(2\)](#))

- *The proposed development is surrounded by residential units on all sides.*
- *Also, the largest mass and tallest and longest walls are on west, north and east side of the development, all bordering on residential units. The solar orientation is backwards and casts maximum shadows.*

In addition, in evaluating rezoning proposals, the City of Saint Paul considers:

- Compatibility with land use and zoning classification of property within the general area.
- The trend of development in the area of the property in question.
- Consistency with the 2040 Comp Plan and Summit Hill Plan.
- Suitability of the property for the uses permitted under the existing zoning classification.
 - o Existing zoning classification already make this property suited to build a mixed-use building. Economic considerations are the only reasons to request to rezone to T3 to allow the developers to exceed the current height guidelines.
- [66.331](#) Footnote (e) states that structures cannot exceed 25 feet in height along rear property lines if they abut RT2 residential districts, which is the case here. Structures can only exceed that height of 25 feet if stepped back ‘a distance equal to the additional height’.

None of these considerations are met.

Application for a Variance

Furthermore, this development has requested a variance. A Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) may be granted if the following findings are met:

1. The variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning code.
2. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.
3. The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.
4. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.
5. The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.
6. The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

The developers have failed to establish these findings. To continue to support their application, the developer’s request that these conditions be modified. In order to modify CUP conditions, one must generally find that “[t]he extent, location and intensity of the use will be in substantial compliance with the 2040 Comp Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council; and “[t]he use will not be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety and general welfare.” ([61.500](#))

More specifically, the governing body must find “exceptional undue hardship of the landowner” and must find the new use to be “consistent with the reasonable enjoyment of adjacent property.” (61.502) Applying these standards to the current proposal warrants a refusal for a CUP. Specifically, I believe:

- *the use is NOT in substantial compliance with the 2040 Comp Plan;*
- *the use is NOT in substantial compliance with the EG, which is result of a small area plan;*
- *the use is NOT in substantial compliance with the Summit Hill plan, which called for the EG and called for B2/T2 as “top zoning”;*
- *the use WILL be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood;*
- *the use WILL affect the historic nature of the area; and*
- *the use WILL prevent reasonable enjoyment of adjacent properties.*

Incompatibility with City 2040 Comp Plan

The City of Saint Paul has studied these issues and recently issued a **2040 Comp Plan**. This proposed project does not meet its land use and housing criteria; examples include:

Policy LU-29. Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition to those permitted in adjoining districts

Policy LU-36. Promote neighborhood- serving commercial businesses within Urban Neighborhoods that are compatible with the character and scale of the existing residential development

Policy H-14. Encourage the use of low-impact landscaping, such as no-mow yards, native landscaping and rain gardens, to reduce the consumption of natural resources in yard maintenance and encourage the use of yards as carbon sinks.

Policy H-47. Encourage high-quality urban design for residential development that is sensitive to context, but also allows for innovation and consideration of market needs.

Policy H-50. Balance the market demand for larger homes in strong market areas with the need to maintain a mix of single-family housing types that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood context.

IV. Objections Summarized

The developer proposes a 5-story, 80-unit, 116-bedroom multi-family building that would be out of character and scale compared to the rest of the surrounding area, with potentially large negative impacts with regard to parking spillover into an already parking-challenged area, increased alley traffic, potential water run-off issues, as well as blocking light/creating shadows across nearby properties due to its height and smaller setbacks, and almost entirely eliminating green space.

As proposed, this building would be grossly out of character with the surrounding area:

- It would be a tall building, looming over adjacent properties, eliminating privacy in back yards for at least a block in all directions, blocking light and air flow, and creating shadows across entire lots because of its height;
- Aside from its height, its huge mass, nominal proposed setbacks, would be a notable anomaly and interrupt the texture and flow of the adjacent blocks and neighborhoods; and
- It virtually eliminates green space between its footprint, and the impervious materials used in the very narrow area between the sidewalk and proposed building.

There is nothing that precludes the developers from using this property for a building which conforms to the zoning code, and it is clear that in fact, economic considerations are driving their desire to build a structure that is too large for the lot, cannot support the parking requirements attendant on the proposed density, and would be massively out of character with the surrounding area (see photos below). A three-story building would be a more suitable use for a lot this size and would not require the requested variances to function on this particular property. This option can be economically feasible, and I encourage the St. Paul City Planning Commission and Zoning Committee to gather residents with development expertise to assist the developer on this if desired by the owners.

Analysis of many, varied City statutes and studies confirm that this proposed development should not proceed as designed. This design ignores the unique historical nature of our neighborhood. The design thwarts the expressed preference of Summit Hill neighbors; a recent survey showed that 50% of SHA residents want to keep the EG in its entirety and only 18% wanting to reject it.¹ The residents have made their thoughts and concerns known to our elected officials who should honor those preferences.

Factually, this project runs counter to many safeguards that have been in place for years in order to protect the unique and special area that is our neighborhood. To recap my objections - they are:

1. The building size, bulk and site planning.
 - a. The proposed building is too tall, too big and not in scale with the surrounding area.
 - i. Current zoning caps a building's height at 36 feet; this proposed building stands at 59 feet 10 inches.
 - ii. It is too dense.
 - iii. It is positioned too close to the alley.
 - iv. Its height is in the wrong places, casting maximum shadows.
2. The negative impact it will have on the neighborhood
 - a. The size of this proposed development will impact traffic, parking and safety in the area. Recent parking studies showed parking in this block of St. Albans is already at capacity.

¹ The remaining 32% wanted to keep the EG with some changes, but there is no specificity as to the changes, including whether they were seeking more or less intensification of building on Grand. Public meetings showed that there was interest on both sides.

- i. The developers show 68 parking stalls for 80 apartments with 116 bedrooms. There will be a likelihood of 2-car families/residents given the type of units being built and the cost. Those who can afford these rents will have cars.
 - ii. The developer also shows just 31 stalls for three retail restaurants.
 - iii. Residents will necessarily need parking on the surrounding streets. There is no parking available because of the already intensely parked adjacent streets.
 - b. The size and design of this project will lessen the neighborhood character; the unique, charming and historic character will be diminished, and the adjacent property values will likely fall as well.
 - i.
- 3. Its noncompliance with existing laws and zoning rules as detailed above.
- 4. The absence of any real understanding of the parking issues in this area

This large-scale project will exacerbate already existing parking shortfalls in this area.

- a. Existing restaurants are required to provide 60 parking spots with 9 made available for employees. This proposal includes 31 parking spots with no additional spots for employees.
- b. The proposal includes 80 units (with 116 bedrooms) and 68 parking spots. The provision of less than one parking spot per unit is inadequate. There will be more than one person in many of the apartments and they will have cars.
- c. The claim that residents will exclusively bike or walk to work is unrealistic. This intensification will add to a parking shortfall that already exists here. The same holds true for bus usage.²
- d. There is no concession made for the traffic generated by delivery trucks, garbage/recycling trucks, and other operations-related traffic. I will forward current pictures to explain the problem with the proposal.
- e. Grand Avenue is the same width for its entire length, approximately 54 feet. The road widths of other St Paul streets with larger developments are substantially wider; Snelling is 100 feet wide; Marshall is 80 feet wide on its west end and 60 feet on its east end; and University is 120 feet wide.
- f. St Albans is a narrow one-way street (32 feet wide) with nearly 100% on-street parking occupancy. This will make traffic flow extraordinarily difficult. The City has determined that the area of Grand and Dale has one of the greatest parking shortfalls/parking intensifications in the City. In addition, during the height of COVID, when there was no indoor dining, St. Albans and other surrounding streets were fully parked in the evenings with residential parking.
- g. The increased traffic, parking and pedestrian safety issues that accompany increased density could actually drive potential visitors to Grand Avenue away.

² Grand Avenue has one low frequency bus route #63. The route recently reduced its number of stops; there is no stop at St. Albans. Route #63 has below-average utilization in a bus system that saw a 4.5% reduction in ridership and a 1.4% reduction in total transit usage in 2018. Route #63 has a frequency of 20 minutes or more most days. Only during rush hour does the frequency increase to 10 to 20 minutes. Stated another way, 77% of the time Route #63 has a frequency of 20 minutes or more. Also, bus stops have been removed from Grand Avenue, including the one at the corner of St. Albans and Grand, adjacent to this project's location.

V. Conclusion

Developing a project at this site is possible and desirable. Current zoning B2 allows a 3-story mixed use project that could create new housing, provide updated space for the restaurants, improve street and sidewalk connections (instead of the large parking lot at the corner). Staying in existing zoning would create positive impacts for Grand *and* St Albans, for businesses *and* residents. Also, this block is part of the “GrandenDale node” – Summit Hill’s most dense residential area. Further intensity proposed is well beyond what is feasible or appropriate for this intersection and disrespects the immediate neighbors and surrounding neighborhood.

This surrounding neighborhood is special. It is a historic neighborhood. Directly to the north is Summit Avenue, a locally-designated historic district created in the 1980s to protect the integrity and preserve this treasure that attracts visitors from all over the world. Similarly, the areas directly to the south of Grand Avenue are national- and state-designated historic districts, with protections in place to preserve the unique character of these homes. And, Grand Avenue, itself, is a state-designated district.

The scale of the neighborhood is consistently 2-3 stories high. There are two notable exceptions that should not be given any precedential weight here: the building at 745 Grand (Grand Place - a 6-story condo at Grotto & Grand built in 1981 when a gap in the zoning code allowed something like that to be built), and at 1060 Grand (a 4-story Oxford Hill development at Oxford & Grand which also took advantage of gaps in the zoning code.) Both of these examples have setbacks from the rear alley of more than 25 feet making these comparisons invalid. Also the EG specifically closed these gaps to regulate the heights.

For reference, below is the scale of proposed project in relation to surrounding buildings.



From: [Eric Ruhland](#)
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Re: Zoning variance at 695 Grand
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 1:52:55 PM

Dr. Eric Ruhland
Home-790 Summit Ave St Paul 55105
St Paul Pet Hospital-Cathedral Hill-377 Dayton Ave St Paul 55102
St Paul Pet Hospital-Highland-2057 Randolph St Paul 55105

On Wed, Jun 30, 2021 at 1:31 PM *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Thank you for your comments. We ask that you include your address on testimony to be submitted into the public record. Thank you.

Samantha Langer

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

From: dr.ruhland@gmail.com <dr.ruhland@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 12:32 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Zoning variance at 695 Grand

My name is Eric Ruhland. I am a local home owner (790 Summit Ave), and local business owner(St Paul Pet Hospital).

I moved to St Paul over 8 years ago with the intention of starting a business and growing my family. I purchased my home on Summit Ave just over 7 years ago. During that time we have converted a dilapidated vacant home into a historic gem, and retrofitted an old photo development space into a veterinary hospital. I have obeyed every principle of historic preservation and thought that my local leaders believed the same thing. I seem confused by the recent push to turn this neighborhood into something it is not. I oppose this variance and ask that you do the same.

By passing these variances you are disregarding the sacrifice of generations of people before you and jeopardizing the sensitive and intimate relationship between an exclusive historic residential neighborhood and its associated business district. Not one home owner I have spoken to in a 3 block radius of this project is on board with the variance. NOT ONE! I dont think you will find another issue that will be so sensitive with such a lasting impact on our community.

Are we the next Uptown? The next North Loop? I hope with all of my soul we are not. Saint Paul has more history, character, and charm than that. I ask that you vote to reject these zoning variances proposed at 695 Grand Ave and others like it. We have not come all this way, being led by courageous leaders before us to bow to the pressure of the almighty dollar and chalk it all up for the progress of man.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eric Ruland

Sent from my iPhone

--

Dr. Eric Ruhland *owner*
St. Paul Pet Hospital
Cell: **651-238-6815**
Office: **651-789-6275**
Fax: **651-225-0869**

From: [AJ Jones](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Oppose Dixies/695 Grand
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 11:47:33 AM

I had sent an email against this project to the neighborhood committee, Summit Hill, voicing concerns of Grand Avenue employees. Representing people in Grand, who work late hours and need parking for safety, and I won't be able to afford these overpriced new apartments.

I saw that my email was included and I read a whole bunch of emails from a whole bunch of people.

There were way more people who were against this proposal than were for it. By a lot.

I don't understand how a neighborhood group can vote against what the majority of people who live and work and shop in the area wrote in? Doesn't seem democratic to me.

I hope that this committee will see how bad this project will be for Grand Avenue. The people who know and work and live and care about it have wrote in, y'all should listen.

AJ Jones
St Paul

From: [John Ofstedal](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Public comment concerning 695 Grand Ave. Proposal
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:24:57 PM

Dear St Paul City Planning Commission,

I wanted to write to you to voice concerns over the proposed development at 695 Grand Avenue. I looked over the proposed plans, and I think that the building would overwhelm the area, especially considering the already busy streets and the insufficient public transport options. As a college student, I agree in theory with bringing more people, especially young people, to the Grand Ave area. However, before doing so the city should increase options for pedestrian and bike traffic, and increase the frequency of the Grand and Dale busses. I really do want a more diverse neighborhood, but the costs of the proposed units are so high as to be prohibitive to many. It will also degrade the quality of living and property values of me and my neighbors who will be subject to constant construction and traffic due to the unwieldy project.

Thank you for considering my concerns,

John Ofstedal
24 St Albans St S

From: [kathryn olmstead](mailto:kathryn.olmstead)
To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary
Subject: Re: Rezoning application at 695 Grand Avenue/Dixies site
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:04:01 PM

I forgot to add my street address; I live and work out of my home at 1086 Linwood Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105

Thanks!
Kathy

kathryn
Olmstead, LLC

www.kathryn-olmstead.com

p 651.659.9450
m 651.442.9450

On Jun 30, 2021, at 4:00 PM, kathryn olmstead <kathy.olmstead@me.com> wrote:

I am writing this email to oppose the rezoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies. A mixed use project could be built without rezoning. Rezoning is being used to exceed height and bulk limits. I am a long time Saint Paul resident (40 years) and Summit Hill homeowner/business owner and have been a frequent shopper on Grand Avenue since my youth. This project is massive and thoughtless. As a design professional and sometimes adjunct professor of Architecture at the University of Minnesota, I would say this project is a good example of *bad design!* It is too big and too tall, it does not appropriately relate to the surrounding scale and completely out of character with our neighborhood. It will in fact, damage the neighborhood; creating too much shadow for the neighboring dwellings, as well creating pedestrian hazards. This kind of thoughtless money hungry development is causing blight in our city neighborhoods (e.g., what is happening all over Uptown and Lyn-lake?!) If I were grading it, it would fail.

I do support a mixed-use development that is well designed to reflect the scale and character of the neighborhood, and that would comply with current zoning rules (this is why we have zoning rules; to protect our neighborhoods from unthinking development!) I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made for developers of luxury housing with no stake in our neighborhood (a developer who lives in Minnetonka for the past 40 years and build projects on spec to sell to out of town interests is not a vested in the neighborhood Saint Paul neighbor!)

Thank you,

Kathy

kathryn
Olmstead, LLC

www.kathryn-olmstead.com

p 651.659.9450
m 651.442.9450

From: [Lloyd Lentz](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Against current 695 Grand proposal
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 1:33:19 PM

Hello, I want to voice my objection to the current proposal for 695 Grand redevelopment. It is too large, too tall, and not in spirit or compliance with many many decades of neighborhood design and intent.

I support the East Grand Overlay District, and I do not support the idea that a developer could "opt-out" of the law and intent.

Lloyd Lentz
Resident of
692 Summit Ave, St Paul, MN 55105
for 46 years.

[sent from mobile]

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand
Date: Thursday, July 1, 2021 9:31:14 AM

From: Mike Brennan <mike@mnrealtyschool.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:21 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>;
ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand

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

- I have owned on the east end of Grand Ave/Summit Hill area for 31+ years.
- I live in a single-family house on the northeast corner of Victoria Street and Goodrich Avenue.
- I strongly oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies.
- I am a Summit Hill resident homeowner.
- This project is too big and too tall, and it is out of character with our neighborhood. It will damage the neighborhood.
- I support a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules.
- I support the East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules. Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed.
- There are high levels of congestion and traffic in the area already.

sincerely,
Michael Brennan
112 South Victoria Street
Saint Paul, MN 55105

(651) 227-1763 (home)
(651) 470-5656 (Cell)

From: [Regan Hall Reinerth](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Fwd: Oppose rezoning for 695 Grand
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 2:30:38 PM

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

From: **Regan Hall Reinerth** <reganhr@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jun 30, 2021 at 10:41 AM
Subject: Oppose rezoning for 695 Grand
To: <ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Councilmember Noecker,

I am writing to let you know that I am against the rezoning to T3 for 695 Grand Avenue.

The proposed development is not in keeping with the overall aesthetic of this section of Grand Avenue. The development would be too high and the footprint too large for the site. It would provide no transition to adjacent development. T3 is not consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and would constitute spot zoning.

My family and I have lived in this neighborhood for nearly 10 years (99 Crocus Place). We greatly appreciate the quaintness of Grand Avenue, specifically the section between Dale and Victoria. We moved here because of the historic nature of the neighborhood and carefully restored our home to reflect the beauty and craftsmanship of the homes in our neighborhood.

The development as proposed would dwarf the buildings around it and stick out, much like the apartment complex on the north side of Grand to the west of Grotto.

Please do NOT vote in favor of this development.

Sincerely,

Regan Hall Reinerth
99 Crocus Place
St. Paul, MN 55102

651-443-2740

From: [Samantha Loesch](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary; Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Cc: [Siegworth, Emma \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Development at 695 Grand Av
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 2:41:12 PM

I live across the alley from the proposed 695 Grand Av development, and I wish to officially object to the project. The scale is too big and the building is too tall. I am concerned about the massive 60 foot tall and 200 foot long structure built right up to the alley. I am concerned about snow and ice removal and overall safety of the alley. I am also concerned that there is not enough parking planned.

Samantha Loesch
692 Summit Av, Saint Paul MN 55105
(612)859-6163

SAMANTHA LOESCH
SELOESCH@GMAIL.COM | 612.859.6163

From: [Steve Kozachok](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: Application for 695 Grand
Date: Thursday, July 1, 2021 6:24:26 AM

Hello,

I oppose the zoning application for 695 Grand/Dixies.

I am a resident of the neighborhood and have strong feelings in opposition to granting an exception to the current zoning rules for this purpose. It appears to me the only upside for an exception would be to the developers and owners. A development in compliance with the existing zoning rules would be welcomed.

Please do not grant an exception in this case.

Steve Kozachok
832 Fairmount Ave, St Paul, MN 55105
651-245-6349

From: topho@usinternet.com
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: re zoning Grand Avenue
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 6:00:28 PM

Dear Committee,

We have been residents of the Grand Avenue corridor for 37 years and take pride in preserving its character. The proposed zoning changes or precedent setting variance to the height of the development at Grand and St Albans would impact the nature of Grand Avenue.

Please do not approve the changes.

Regards,

Tom and Anita Ophoven
744 Lincoln Ave

From: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#)
Subject: FW: 695 Grand Avenue/Dixies
Date: Thursday, July 1, 2021 9:31:25 AM

From: Tom and Sally Patterson <skipatterson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 10:14 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue/Dixies

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

Ms. Butler: We are neighbors of the Dixies Building on Grand Avenue. We live at 703 Linwood Ave., 5 short length blocks immediately south of it. We patronize Dixies, Emmetts and Saji-Ya.

We are very opposed to the Kenefick project. It is wildly out of scale with the neighborhood. It doesn't come close to meeting the applicable zoning standards. Exceptions to zoning for minor differences from the regulations are understandable. If this project is approved as is, it makes one wonder why have any zoning at all? Zoning has to *mean* something, doesn't it?? This project, if approved largely as is, could be a precedent for other similar proposals nearby, specifically the north and south sides of Grand just east of Avon. Grand could be irretrievably changed from the nationally recognized ideal urban residential/neighborhood commercial character that it now has.

We are not opposed to a repurposing and improvement of the Dixie's building. But it should be essentially within the existing zoning standards.

Tom and Sally Patterson

From: [Becky Erickson and Dan Sullivan](#)
To: [Butler, Sonja \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary](#); [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Dixie's Redevelopment Project
Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 4:40:16 PM

St. Paul Planning Commission and City Council Members,

We are writing to urge you to oppose the zoning application and variances for 695 Grand/Dixies. This project is too big and too tall and is out of character with our neighborhood. We believe the current proposal, if approved, will damage the neighborhood and adversely affect future development along Grand. We are in support of a mixed-use development that would comply with current zoning rules, rules which were carefully considered and enacted to protect and preserve the street and neighborhood. The East Grand Avenue Overlay and the existing zoning rules should control the decision, and the application, as it is currently written, should be denied. Exceptions should not be made for luxury housing, such as that proposed. If you approve all the variances, you ignore the East Grand Avenue Overlay and existing zoning rules, which will influence future development on this corridor and will encourage additional applications for variances. Please decline these variance requests and encourage the developers to reconfigure the project to fit with space.

Respectfully,

Daniel Sullivan and Becky Erickson
Summit Hill Residents and Homeowners
857 Lincoln Avenue