

## Lexington Station Site Plan Review - Comprehensive Plan Summary

December 29, 2020

The proposed mixed-use project is consistent with the 2040 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan (2020), the Lexington Station Area Plan (2008), and Union Park Community Plan (2016). Generally, the comprehensive plan encourages transit supportive density and supports growth and development of new housing, particularly in areas identified as Mixed Use, Urban Neighborhoods and/or in areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity, to meet market demand for living in walkable, transit-accessible, urban neighborhoods. The plan also supports increases in density on valuable urban land and calls for high-quality urban design that supports pedestrian friendliness and a healthy environment, and enhances the public realm.

### 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The proposed mixed-use development is consistent with the 2040 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan, including the Lexington Station Area Plan and the Union Park Community Plan. The 2040 Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan (2020) identifies the project site along the west side of Lexington Parkway as being in a mixed-use area and a neighborhood node. Mixed-use areas are primarily along thoroughfares well-served by transit. The main distinguishing characteristic is a balance of jobs and housing within walking distance of one another. Neighborhood nodes are compact, mixed-use areas that provide shops, services, neighborhood-scale civic and institutional uses, recreational facilities and employment close to residences. They may be neighborhood centers, transit station areas or urban villages, and have often developed adjacent to major intersections or at former street car stops. Neighborhood nodes serve a neighborhood's daily needs. Neighborhood Nodes are denser concentrations of development relative to the adjacent future land use categories. Land use goals in the 2040 plan include: economic and population growth focused around transit; neighborhood nodes that support daily needs within walking distance; equitably-distributed community amenities, access to employment and housing choice; and people-centered urban design.

### Land use policies in the plan include:

#### *City Wide*

**Policy LU-1.** Encourage transit-supportive density and direct the majority of growth to areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity. *The project site is in the Lexington Station Area where higher density is encouraged.*

**Policy LU-9.** Promote high-quality urban design that supports pedestrian friendliness and a healthy environment, and enhances the public realm. *The developer sited the building to hold the corners along Lexington Parkway and proposes an articulated building façade above the first floor to help break up its massing. Windows and door openings along Lexington Parkway enhance street level activation. Twelve-foot wide sidewalks along Lexington Parkway and the 15-foot wide landscaped boulevard between the sidewalk and roadway enhance pedestrian safety, friendliness, walkability.*

**Policy LU-13.** Support strategies, as context and technology allow, to improve off-street parking efficiency, such as shared parking agreements, district ramps, car sharing, electric vehicle charging and reduced parking overall. *The project plans to share parking with the Wilder Foundation in the ramp located just west of the development site to limit the amount of new parking that needs to be built.*

**Policy LU-14.** Reduce the amount of land devoted to off-street parking in order to use land more efficiently, accommodate increases in density on valuable urban land, and promote the use of transit and other non-car mobility modes. *The project increases density on the site, promotes use of transit, walking, and biking, and incorporates a reduced number of structured off-street parking spaces.*

**Policy LU-18.** Support facilities outside public rights-of-way to support pedestrian and bicycling activity, such as sidewalk access to building entrances, adequate lighting, trails and bicycle parking/storage. *The project plans to incorporate an enhanced bike-pedestrian path into the site design at the north end of the property and connectivity opportunities to Fuller Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood. To enhance safe crossing of the private road west of the site, an accessible pedestrian ramp is planned. This will be useful to residents of the project who park in the Wilder ramp, those accessing nearby businesses and transit to the north, and those accessing Midway Peace Park to the west.*

#### **Mixed-Use**

**Policy LU-28.** Support pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and visual interest through commercial building design. *The project sites the building to hold the corners along Lexington Parkway and proposes an articulated building façade to help break up its massing. Windows and door openings enhance street level activation. A primary pedestrian building entrance on Lexington Parkway is needed for the commercial space to meet traditional neighborhood design standard Sec. 66.343(b)(12). Twelve-foot wide sidewalks enhance pedestrian friendliness and walkability along Lexington Parkway and the 15-foot wide landscaped boulevard between the sidewalk and roadway enhance pedestrian safety, friendliness, walkability.*

**Policy LU-29.** Ensure that building massing, height, scale and design transition to those permitted in adjoining districts. *The alley along the southern border of the site allows for a transition in density between the development site and the single-family homes in a T3 zoning district. Lexington Parkway serves as a transition to the T2 multi-family uses on the east side of the street.*

#### **Neighborhood Nodes**

**Policy LU-30.** Focus growth at Neighborhood Nodes using the following principles: 1. Increase density toward the center of the node and transition in scale to surrounding land uses. 2. Prioritize pedestrian-friendly urban design and infrastructure that emphasizes pedestrian safety. 3. Cluster neighborhood amenities to create a vibrant critical mass. 4. Improve access to jobs by prioritizing development with high job density. *The increased density is located within the neighborhood node. The building's design takes into consideration the need for pedestrian friendly urban design and new sidewalks will enhance pedestrian comfort and safety. The site includes space for a commercial tenant and is within walking distance of amenities to satisfy many daily needs.*

**Policy LU-31.** Invest in Neighborhood Nodes to achieve development that enables people to meet their daily needs within walking distance and improves equitable access to amenities, retail and services. *The site includes space for a commercial tenant and is within walking distance of amenities to satisfy many daily needs.*

#### **Housing policies include:**

**Policy H-16.** 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. *The market-rate project offers a range of housing options. The developer notes that the project supports the desire of area stakeholders to see a wider range of rents within new, privately financed developments, including more units at deeper levels of affordability. This stretch of University Avenue has not seen the development of much market-rate housing, unlike sites west of Snelling Avenue. A mix of market-rate and subsidized housing is key to addressing Saint Paul's housing needs.*

**Policy H-46.** Support the development of new housing, particularly in areas identified as Mixed Use, Urban Neighborhoods, and/or in areas with the highest existing or planned transit service, to meet market demand for living in walkable, transit-accessible, urban neighborhoods. *The project site is in the Lexington Station Area, a Neighborhood Node, where higher density is encouraged.*

**Transportation policies include:**

**Policy T-12.** Minimize and consolidate driveway curb cuts as redevelopment opportunities arise for redevelopment sites that have sufficient existing access or can reasonably be accessed via side streets, alleys or shared driveways, especially in areas with anticipated high pedestrian activity or with adjacent planned bikeways. *Curb cuts are minimized with the project. No curb cuts along Lexington Parkway are planned. The development will have two curb cuts on the private road on the west side of the building, one for the commercial space and one for the apartments. A drop off/loading area is planned along the private road at the north end of the building. A garage entrance for move-ins and move-outs is planned for the southeast corner of the building, with access from the alley.*

**LEXINGTON STATION AREA PLAN**

The mixed-use development is consistent with the Lexington Station Area Plan (2008). The station area plan identifies a portion of the project site as being in an area identified as The Lexington Hub and an area identified as sensitive neighborhood infill. The Hub is an area where future redevelopment will strengthen the edges of the block and better define entrance to points for pedestrian and vehicles. The infill area calls for development to be sensitively designed to preserve light, views, and privacy in single family neighborhoods. The project site abuts commercial and institutional uses to the north, medium density residential uses to the west, a commercial use and single-family homes to the south, and commercial and medium density residential uses on the east side of Lexington Parkway. The project site is in the Union Park neighborhood and near the boundary with three other neighborhoods: Summit-University to the east; Frogtown to the northeast; and Hamline-Midway the northwest.

In terms of public realm, the station area plan calls for 14-foot sidewalks to be established within the mobility enhancement area, policies 3.1 and 5.2. The Mobility Enhancement Area is where a higher level of pedestrian activity is anticipated, and a high-quality pedestrian environment is key. *The proposed plans for the project include a 12-foot wide sidewalk along Lexington Parkway and a 7-foot wide sidewalk on private property along the private drive on the north side of the site. A 15-foot wide landscaped boulevard between the sidewalk and Lexington Parkway is planned, making for a very walkable and pedestrian friendly environment. Lexington Parkway is identified as a future trail by the Department of Parks and Recreation. There is adequate right of way to develop the trail adjacent to the site.*

In terms of built form, the station area plan states that all new development should promote transparency and activity at street level, policy 4.2.1. *Plans for the proposed project call for active amenity and commercial uses along Lexington Parkway with entrances along the parkway and along the private drive at the north end of the building. A continuous building façade is planned along Lexington Parkway. The S-shaped building above the first floor will help to break up massing of the structure along the frontage and provide for light and air to residential units. Balconies will help break up the massing as well.*

In terms of land use and development program, the station area plan calls for development of a true mixed-used corridor, noting that all transit-supportive uses should be permitted here, including medium to high density family residential, and commercial and retail uses, policy 4.2.2. *Plans for the proposed project include a six-story mixed-use building with 288 residential units, about 3,000 square feet of commercial space, and 1,500 square feet of rentable work suite space for tenants of the building.*

In terms of circulation, parking, and access, the station area plan calls for the urban grid pattern to be reestablished including an extension of Fuller Avenue west of Lexington Parkway, for large single parcels to be subdivided to create a more walkable environment of smaller-scaled streets and blocks, and for formalizing existing access routes to create a new pattern of streets and blocks, policy 4.1.3. In terms of movement and connections, the station area plan calls for strengthening Charles and Fuller as East-West bike routes and extending Fuller Avenue to the west, policy 5.1. *Plans for the proposed project do not include reestablishing the street grid, extending Fuller Avenue, subdividing parcels, or formalizing existing access routes. Nor do the proposed plans include extending Fuller to the west or a bike route. The City has not taken steps to preserve the right of way needed for a Fuller Avenue extension since the station area plan was adopted in 2008. Until the City secures the necessary resources for desired public infrastructure, the private property may be used for any legal use permitted under the current zoning classification, provided that the proposed use meets all applicable conditions and/or standards.*

The project site's location within the station area and the mobility enhancement area makes walkability in and around the site a high priority. Creation of a more cohesive and walkable neighborhood is key, which is why the plan calls for wide sidewalks. *Twelve-foot wide sidewalks along Lexington Parkway and the 15-foot wide landscaped boulevard between the sidewalk and roadway enhance pedestrian safety, friendliness, walkability. The project plans to incorporate an enhanced bike-pedestrian path into the site design at the north end of the property and connectivity opportunities to Fuller Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood. To enhance safe crossing of the private road west side of the site, an accessible pedestrian ramp is planned. This will be useful to residents of the project who park in the Wilder ramp, those accessing nearby businesses and transit to the north, and those accessing Midway Peace Park, about two blocks to the west. Midway Peace Park, a new City park, is the only neighborhood park that will be accessible to residents of the project without the need to cross a major thoroughfare.*

### **UNION PARK COMMUNITY PLAN**

The proposed mixed-use development is consistent with the Union Park Community Plan (2016), which states the neighborhood's goals as the preservation of desirable assets and neighborhood character as well as development to meet present and future needs.

#### **Land Use and Housing Strategies include:**

- LU1.** Support land uses that preserve Union Park as a connected, walkable, mixed-use, sustainable neighborhood with a pedestrian-oriented, human-scale streetscape.
- LU2.3.** Ensure that new development fits within the character and scale of adjacent neighborhoods.
- LU3.2.** Explore opportunities to increase density levels and promote new development along key corridors that support transit-oriented development.
- H1.1.** Support multi-unit mixed-use development in mixed-use corridors that can accommodate higher density levels, while minimizing impacts on adjacent lower density areas, and discourage multi-unit housing and retail uses that are incompatible with single-family residential areas.
- H1.2.** Support efforts to develop a wide range of housing affordability levels, promoting more affordable housing along major transit routes including Snelling Bus Rapid Transit and the Green Line Light Rail line.
- H1.3.** Support housing development designed to promote pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit activity.