David Eide

From: Craig Aamlie <craig.aamlie@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 2:00 PM
To: dsi-ZoningReview@stpaul.com; *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview

You don't often get email from craig.aamlie@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Variances are not for bailing out landlords and developers who feel they paid too much for the land, and must now—at the expense of neighbors—build taller than the code allows.

If height rezoning is the desire, it should be put forward as a new rule that applies to all, not implemented landlord-by-landlord as lucrative favors; and it should be before the public for ample time, as was the process with the eastern section of Grand Avenue.

The height variance requested will place the homes to the north in the shade of the structure from mid-November to early February every year; much longer that if the rules are followed. Beyond that, the fifth floor will provide a vantage point into the adjacent homes that is not just a difference in type, but a difference in kind.

If you set the precedent of allowing developers to break the rules in order help them meet their investment goals over the objects of the harmed adjacent families, it will be a value statement that is out of step with the people of St. Paul.

David Eide

From: Flannery Delaney <flannerydelaney@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2024 6:41 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Subject: 1963 Grand variance request

You don't often get email from flannerydelaney@hotmail.com. Learn why this is important

To whom it may concern:
We are opposed to the request for a large apartment building at 1963 Grand Avenue. It is way too big for the location and the height variance is not appropriate for the neighborhood. The address of applicant has a misspelling, "Ashlund". Doesn't bode well for the future project. Please reject this variance request.
Flannery Delaney
2126 Lincoln Avenue

Get Outlook for iOS

David Eide

From: Katherine Cairns <kacairns007@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 8:27 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Cc: Laura Wallace
Subject: St Paul BZA- Opposition to Height Variance for 1963 Grand Ave.

You don't often get email from kacairns007@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

St Paul BZA members-
I am in opposition to the requested variance for a 50 foot height for the proposed apartment complex at 1963 Grand Ave. for the following reasons:

- After hearing a presentation by the developers on Oct. 23, 2024 at the MacGroveland Community Council meeting, they did not identify major difficulties in complying with the current 40 foot height, other than financial reasons and no unique property circumstances exist or could be articulated by the developers;
- The requested variance will alter the essential character of the surrounding neighborhood as documented by neighbors who will have more shade on their property, decreased ice melt in the alleyway during the winter months due to lack of sun, and life safety concerns for the increase in alley traffic at Prior Ave. and Grand Ave; and
- The "luxury apartments with amenities", as they were described by the developers, do not create more affordable housing options in the neighborhood or offer below market rent.

Thank you for your consideration.
Katherine Cairns
--
Katherine A Cairns
1992 Grand Ave. St Paul, MN 55105
651.492.1994

David Eide

From: Kevin Skow <Kevin.Skow@francisway.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2024 4:48 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Cc: tnorgard@carlsoncaspers.com
Subject: 1963 Grand Ave zoning variance

You don't often get email from kevin.skow@francisway.com. Learn why this is important

My name is Kevin Skow and I am a resident at 1978 Summit Ave

I am writing to oppose the proposed zoning variance for the new project at 1963 Grand Ave. The zoning code limits the height of the building to 40' and I support following this limit.

***Please make note that my email address has changed to kevin.skow@francisway.com. As needed, please update your records.*

Kevin Skow, CPC
Vice President – Retirement Plan Consultant
Francis LLC

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David Eide

From: Kristin N. Hankwitz <knhankwitz@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2024 5:54 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Subject: Opposition to Proposed Construction at 1963 Grand Avenue

[You don't often get email from knhankwitz@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification]

I am writing to communicate my opposition to the proposed construction of a multi-family dwelling at 1963 Grand Avenue in Saint Paul.

My family's single family home is situated directly behind and across the alley from the proposed property. The proposed property's elevation is well-above our home's backyard. A 40-50 foot tall structure would provide a bird's eye view into our property.

Our experience in sharing an alley with the 1963 Grand Avenue property owners has been unpleasant. The alley-side of 1963 is usually overflowing with trash. The yard is weedy and unkempt. There are often illegally parked vehicles owned by tenants, hired handy workers, and the property owner that make access to and from our garage and the alleyway difficult or impossibly.

It's conceivable that a larger building with more tenants would compound these problems. Please give thoughtful consideration to the impact a 40-50' multi-unit building would have on us and other residential homeowners. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kristin Hankwitz
1945 Summit Avenue

Sent from my iPhone

Public Hearing – Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals

Variance Requests for 1063 Grand Avenue, Saint Paul

October 28, 2024

Written Comments of Larry Starns, Owner of Property located at 1950 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul – Directly across the Alley from the Proposed Applicant's Property

Background

I moved into my home in 1990 and raised a family here. When I moved in there were three families in three separate single-family dwelling that are now proposed to be consolidate. These houses were between two large apartment building which contain approximately 12-16 apartments each; this, in stark contrast to the enormous scale of this Proposal which is anticipating creating seventy-two units.

For that period I have come to know only one person – Lavonne – who has lived in the Eastern Building since we moved into our house. Otherwise, I know and haven know virtually no one in those apartments or houses.

Over the following years each of the three homes were purchased by an individual who decided to rent to students. By 2010 they all were rented to students. We lost connection to the people who lived across the alley from us and the sense of being part of what had been a larger neighborhood.

Following the transition of these homes several waves of student renters came and went.

During that time we experienced no visible maintenance on those former homes with the exception of the installation of a new concrete stairs to the house directly behind us.

Also, there was not visible plan for snow removal as we only say poorly-equipped students trying to (when they did try) remove snow as deep as three feet with only shovels. I often aided them with my snowblower. The Landlord(s) did virtually nothing.

Also, garbage overflowed the City Containers behind these houses whose capacity was designed for a single family not five adults with amazing processed foods and beer consumption capacity.

So, this has not been a positive experience and causes me to wonder why the City would think of rewarding a landowner the freedom to continue this behavior on an even larger scale.

Procedure

The Procedure employed in this Matter disarms affected residents from effectively reviewing, assessing and commenting on the Request for Variances.

While I noticed soil samples being bored in the lot behind us over a year ago, only this past Monday the 21st did I know anything about what was being planned for this Redevelopment. That Notice was mailed by the City on October 18 and did not arrive until Monday. Also, only then did I know that there was a meeting of the MacGroveland Community Council Committee to consider this Project was scheduled for the NEXT Evening. I received no documentation regarding the Request for Variance and only at that virtual Committee Meeting did I learn – very Vaguely- what was planned. Now, only four days later I have to submit comments without any detailed information which will enable to – along with adequate time – to assess the impacts on me should this Request be granted.

So, I cannot provide any detail myself on those impacts but I can articulate some the issues I see with the limited knowledge I have.

I should note that it will require significant time and consultation with knowledgeable experts to assess and describe any concerns I may have that should be considered.

From what I can tell, this is potentially the most serious threat to my enjoyment of my home and its value since I have owned my house and lot since1990.

Overview of Project Context

Saint Paul is known for its neighborhoods and has been a safe and enjoyable place to live as a homeowner. However, this is rapidly changing as institutions and landlords gobble up and tear down single-family homes on Summit and Randolph and Marshall and cause these neighborhoods to shrink. Traffic and Parking issues have arisen in these locations.

Also, it is my understanding that UST is constructing major facilities at Grand Avenue and Cretin Avenue.

Has this context been considered for aggregated impacts on our neighborhood rather than treating this as an isolated construction project?

In this case, the immediate neighborhood I am in has and is being destroyed. I worry about what Saint Paul is doing to itself as well as to me and my (real) neighbors. Saint Paul already has a serious problem with the business occupancy in downtown. I started working downtown 45 years ago and am astonished at the loss of businesses and human inhabitants.

Specific Project Details

As noted above, there is projected a seventy-two unit capacity of this structure. That does not tell us how many people will be housed there and how many vehicles will be associated with them (as we know, we are now a two-car family society.

Traffic and Safety

Thomas Liquors is on the East end of our alley with alley access to Prior Avenue for customer access and parking. At the end of the workday (especially Friday) that intersection becomes extremely congested while walkers, runners, bikers, parents with strollers and dogs with their owners try to walk down Prior. If this Project is allowed (though we don't know exact plans for traffic flow in and out of this building) this congestion and resultant safety risk to people will become far worse.

Because of the number of rental units that use our alley (along with the homeowners), we experience a very large amount of traffic daily in our alley.

How much more traffic will occur with the vehicles associated with this Project?

In my opinion. some type of traffic and safety analysis needs to be conducted.

Environmental Impacts/ Property Enjoyment

Aesthetics

Given that the footprint of these three properties are at grade level on Grand Avenue and that our property sits substantially below at Alley level, the height of the proposed structure will be very substantial if build at that level from our vantagepoint. In fact, it will under any design become a dominating and imposing eyesore.

Shadow Effect / Impact

While given the lack of information I cannot surmise the actual shading effect of the proposed building, it does appear to be a serious issue for us. We have full-sun landscaping which provides us with privacy and beauty in our back yard. What will the shadow and resultant impact to our landscaping and privacy look like? Will it potentially present an issue with an already problematic alley.

In normal Winter years, we experience ice build-up and bad ruts as deep as 12 inches in the alley (largely due to the existing apartment buildings). If more shadowing occurs and more runoff occurs from the proposed structure, this will be greatly exacerbated and likely make not only turning perpendicular (many cars including my own have been stuck and had to be towed due to this) to those ruts as well as traversing the alley (us plus utility, service and emergency vehicles) virtually impassible.

In my opinion, the Alley is already at a point where reconstruction (including below frost line drainage) is badly needed. This will only be exacerbated by more traffic and runoff.

Zoning Concerns

I do not profess to know our zoning ordinances and their history but I understand that, if permitted to proceed, zoning only permits a four-story / 40 foot structure to be built on this consolidated footprint. The proposal to erect a 50-foot structure requires not a Variance but Rezoning – the exclusive purview of the City Council.

And, does this really constitute unpermitted "Spot Zoning?"

Accordingly, is this Hearing valid?

City Goals, Moral Values and Practical Concerns

What this Project will result in is the destruction a very counterbalancing, true residential part of our neighborhood. To reward a property owner of several houses whose condition by their very admission has deteriorated under their ownership and then allow the use of that neglect as a justification to demolish those properties is a moral hazard for the Community. They remain very solid, beautiful properties any family would love to own and enjoy. How many families in Saint Paul need a house like one of these, especially given the proximity to retail vendors and Groveland School?

People need real homes. Those are independent dwellings with the space and amenities needed by individuals and families such as mine and my neighbors. Those people need to be part of a community where you know your neighbor and zoning creates uniformity of use that we rely upon.

David Eide

From: mbcarlsonstarns@gmail.com
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 9:08 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Cc: larrystarns@gmail.com
Subject: Object to zoning code change at 1963 Grand Ave project

You don't often get email from mbcarlsonstarns@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

David Eide,

As the neighbor at 1950 Summit, my property and family is directly affected by this project. It is ridiculous that the city is operating in a fashion that gives home owners zero information on the proposed building, with 2 days notice to a Community Council meeting about this project, and less than 4 days until comments are due to you. With no information, how can you grant a variance? This is how you plan projects?

The total information I have about this project is the fact that it is three lots and 72 units, and these facts alone prove that it is out of character for our historic Grand Avenue corridor. The dwellings on this street are single family homes, townhouses and small- as in 3 story and 18 unit- apartments. There is NOTHING anywhere near this size or density in this entire area, for at least a mile in all directions. Not only would this building be more than twice the size of any other structure, it will be on the biggest hill in many blocks. This proposed 50 foot tall building will sit on a hill and will tower above everything else in a several mile area. The closest you will find buildings of this proposed size is Marshall- over a mile away. This is indisputably way out of character for the area.

This project is also too big for the block because:

We have extreme parking issues already. I have to pay for a permit to park in front of my own home. The current 3 dwellings owned by Mr Benegas, and rented to tenants prove the fact that one parking spot per unit is not enough. All three of these properties have a garage. One has a 3 car garage. Currently, every night we have people parking cars and large trucks behind these garages- illegally as these are not parking spots- because there is no other parking and one parking spot per unit is not enough. Your 64 spaces will not be enough, and the area can't handle more parking deficit.

As this is an unusually long block, with many more apartments that the other areas of our immediate neighborhood, we are already a densely packed block. There is a high level of traffic through our alley because of the high number of residences, residents, and Thomas Liquor with delivery trucks using the alley as a delivery zone. Add in the garbage trucks, deliveries and maintenance vehicles and our alley is never empty or quiet. Where will the cars enter this proposed apartment? Where will trash access be? How will moving vans park? Have you seen the traffic at Thomas Liquor on a Friday or weekend? Our single lane, unpaved alley with illegal parkers and trash bins in the traffic lane is not going to be able to handle the flow of the residents coming and going. Adding 72 more residences with no plan to improve this unpaved, rutted and too narrow alley is irresponsible.

In addition, the alley becomes impassable in winter because there are existing water management issues. This proposed apartment will be on a hill, with the alley on the north side at the bottom of the hill. There will be no sun reaching this area of the alley ever. The existing apartment buildings have no management of the rain runoff or snow melt water that comes off the roofs. Our alley, as explained earlier, is very long and as zero drainage. Current apartments direct this rain/snow melt to the alley, which freezes with extreme ruts which become impassable. Yes, we have pictures and video of this we can provide with actual notice. These smaller apartments cause terrible problems in several spots in the alley, including right at the location of the 3 lots under consideration. The proposed, orders of magnitude larger apartment building's roof water management plan is

unknown. And as a resident who can't get out of her garage because I get stuck in the ruts, Your tenants will have the same problem and worse if the garage opens into the alley. You can't put that large of a building in the existing alley infrastructure. And without a water management improvement to the alley it is irresponsible to add any apartment buildings.

Please do NOT grant a variance to 50 feet of height for this project. Please do NOT grant a variance for floor ratio area. Please build a smaller project that will fit with the size and density of the existing community. And don't build anything until you provide the infrastructure improvements needed to make a new building work.

-Mary Beth

Mary Beth Starns
1950 Summit Ave
St Paul MN 55105
651-587-7708

David Eide

From: Mike Thomas <mike@thomasliquor.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 10:22 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Subject: 1963 GRAND AVE VARIANCE REQUEST

You don't often get email from mike@thomasliquor.com. Learn why this is important

I would like to voice my concerns for the following business proposal at 1963 Grand Ave. As a long term, 4th generation family business owner (102 years on Grand and Prior Aves), we are struggling with the influx in high density, student focused, housing developments in the neighborhood.

Our concerns are two fold:

1: The influx of student housing has drastically reduced available parking for long term residents and business owners.

2: The focus on student occupancy has created a swell of neighbors/tenants during the school year and a relatively vacant neighborhood in the summertime. **As a business owner we seek to have mature neighbors and landlords that maintain the curb and alley appearance of their properties and have a blend of full-time, family tenants versus an exclusive focus on student occupancy.** Student tenants are certainly not the most tidy neighbors and rarely do they patronize area businesses with the same consistency as a non-student tenants who tend to live in the apartment buildings full time.

Thanks for your consideration in this matter.

Mike Thomas

David Eide

From: Terry Fisher <fisher.terry68@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2024 7:21 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Subject: File 24-086457 Opposition to Variance request

You don't often get email from fisher.terry68@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

From: Terry Fisher
1954 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105
fisher.terry68@gmail.com
651-260-5819

File: 24-086457
Attn: David Eide

Please submit the following to The Board of Zoning Appeals.

I am writing to voice my opposition to the request for variance application submission by Reuben Benegas of Benegas Properties LLC. They are requesting 2 variances:

1. Zoning limit for height from 40ft to 50ft.
2. Zoning code limit to the floor area ratio from 2.25 to 2.27.

I am in opposition to both variance requests. As per the St. Paul website on Zoning, I do not believe that Benegas has provided any information that would warrant a variance. Per the St. Paul website on Variance Requests:

1. *The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.* The code is for 40ft max and the variance request is for 50ft. I hope that the height code is put in place to protect property owners that will be impacted by exceeding these limits. I see the zoning code as something to protect my interests as a property owner next to this proposed development.

2. • *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.* Benegas Properties did not establish any practical difficulties that would necessitate the variance request. He stated during the Macalester Groveland Community Council Housing and Land Use Committee meeting that they were trying to maximize the number of units that could be built, in addition to having 2 levels of parking. They could likely build the same number of units and eliminate one level of parking and keep the building at 40ft. If approved, this variance will create a practical difficulty for my family as we will see significantly less sunlight on our property as a result of the building height and the shadow that it will cast. I will not likely have the ability to put solar panels on my garage roof as it will be in perpetual shade.

3. • *The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.* This property is not unique. The choice to go to a 50 foot high building was made by Benegas Properties LLC for economic reasons.

4. • The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. In granting a variance, the board or commission shall make written findings stating the grounds upon which the variance is justified. Inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems constitutes a practical difficulty in the third bullet point above. I feel that this structure will significantly alter the charter of the surrounding area. By allowing this building to go to 50ft it will set a precedent for future projects in the RM2 building zone. This appears to be a re-zoning request under the guise of a variance request. One could argue that this is an example of spot zoning as it would appear arbitrary and only benefit Benegas Properties LLC.

My opposition to the floor ratio variance request is because the variance request is minor. The architect for this project could likely alter the project plans to meet the zoning code as written.

In summary, I am writing in strong opposition to the variance request submitted by Benegas Properties LLC under File 24-086457.

As a long time and proud citizen of St. Paul, I have always adhered to the St. Paul Zoning regulations. I am hopeful that the Zoning regulations will also protect my interests as a property owner in St. Paul.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Terry Fisher

David Eide

From: Tara C. Norgard <TNorgard@carlsoncaspers.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 10:21 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_DSI-ZoningReview
Subject: 1963 Grand Ave zoning variance - and the entire block

You don't often get email from tnorgard@carlsoncaspers.com. Learn why this is important

My name is Tara Norgard and I am a resident at 1978 Summit Ave.

I am writing to oppose the proposed zoning variance for the new project at 1963 Grand Ave. The zoning code limits the height of the building to 40' and I support following this limit.

I also write with extreme displeasure for the lack of care that is shown by the existing landlords on that block of Grand Avenue. The homes and many of the apartments are dilapidated, the yards are uncared for, and the alley and garages look like they are infested with rodents and crumbling. It is a disgrace for the entire neighborhood and the entire city. I implore the City Council to do whatever it can to address the situation. This is a neighborhood of families. We pay sky-high taxes. That block looks like it belongs in the third world, not St. Paul, MN.

Regards,
Tara

CARLSON CASPERS
Intellectual Property Law

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