From: mbcarlsonstarns@gmail.com
To: CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Cc: larrystarns@gmail.com
Subject: Comments on zoning change request for 1963 Grand Ave
Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2024 9:32:02 PM
Attachments: 1963 Grand zoning variance by Mary Beth Starns.pdf

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

Hello City Council,

Please accept my comments Re: zoning variance request for 1963 Grand Ave for tomorrow's City Council Meeting.

-Mary Beth

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

Comments submitted to Saint Paul City Council
RE: 1963 Grand Avenue zoning appeal
By Mary Beth Starns
December 10, 2024

As the property owner at 1950 Summit, my property and family is directly affected by this proposed project.

The basic facts about this project prove that it is out of character for our historic Grand Avenue corridor. The existing dwellings on this street are single family homes, townhouses and small- as in 3 story and 18 unit- apartments. There is NO building 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 sitting on the biggest hill in the area. This proposed 50 foot tall building will sit on a hill with its lowest level above our garage, and it will tower above everything else in a several mile area. 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. There is already permit parking, and Summit, Grand and Prior are all night plow snow removal zones. 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. The proposed 64 spaces will not be enough, and the area can't handle more parking deficit.

The alley is already overloaded. This is an unusually long block, and, with more apartments than the other areas of our immediate neighborhood, we are already a densely packed block. The alley is very narrow at the east end where this building would be located, and trash bins are in the traffic lane the length of the alley. There is a high level of traffic through the 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 the alley is already never empty or quiet. On Friday or a weekend, the traffic and parking at Thomas Liquor already cause backups on Prior avenue. The proposed building plan is to add entrance for parking for 64 additional cars, garbage access, deliveries and moving vans to the alley. The alley entrance closest to the proposed building is via Prior- right at Thomas Liquor, the most congested area. This 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 additional 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 is no water drainage for the entire two block stretch, resulting in 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. Currently apartments direct this rain/snow melt to the alley, which freezes with extreme ruts which become impassable. (we have pictures and video should you want them) These smaller apartments drain water to the alley in several spots along the length of the alley, including right at the location of the 3 lots under consideration. The

proposed building, which is orders of magnitude larger than the buildings surrounding it, has no known roof water management plan. Even solving the water management problem at this location in the alley will not fix the extreme ruts in other areas of the alley. Currently, residents get stuck in the ruts. New tenants will have the same problem and worse if the garage opens into the alley. Adding this additional traffic burden to the existing alley infrastructure- especially without a water management improvement to the entire alley- is irresponsible.

The privacy and property value of my home will be negatively affected by this development. No plan exists to remedy the damage we will suffer with loss of light to our home; loss of sun to our landscaping and loss of privacy with 72 apartments continuously staring down into our yard and home, or the burden of additional noise, and traffic. Our property value will decline. This project is definitely not an improvement to our neighborhood.

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 much smaller project that will actually fit with the size and density of the existing community.

And please don't build anything until you provide the infrastructure improvements needed to make a new building work.

From:	larrystarns@gmail.com
To:	CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Cc:	Mary Beth Starns
Subject:	FW: Comments on zoning change request for 1963 Grand Ave (formerly three parcels: 1947, 1956 and 1963 Grand Avenue)
Date:	Wednesday, December 11, 2024 11:57:42 AM
Attachments:	1963 Grand zoning variance by Mary Beth Starns.pdf

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

Dear City Council:

I live at 1950 Summit Avenue and have done so for 35 years. I am also a 45-year dedicated resident of Saint Paul.

This Request for a Variance should be denied as has been recommended your Zoning Appeals Board.

I agree with the comments of my wife, Marybeth, and our immediate Summit Avenue Residents and Thomas Liquors.

In addition to those comments I think that the Request should be denied for the following reasons:

1. The Proposed Project will destroy three historical homes is this Historic District. These are former family homes that were built at a time when construction was of high quality and design and have classic features. By today's market, these are fine "Starter Homes" in a price category that families in Saint Paul badly need. No apartment can equate to a home with space, privacy and green space. When we moved here in 1990, there were three families occupying those homes and we knew them well. Since becoming rental houses, we have had nothing but problems which will likely only be exacerbated by more people coming and going. And, this will result in a phalanx of three contiguous towering apartment buildings in a row directly behind us we and our immediate neighbors that will be literally in their shadow with no greenspace behind us and winter ice build up in our alley and in front of our garages which currently benefit from sun exposure during the Winter.

2. The current traffic in the neighborhood is at peak capacity. Adding 72 new apartments will greatly increase what is already a serious problem by bringing likely more than 72 cars into the neighborhood which will paralyze the already critical parking situation on Grand Avenue. And, it will also impair access and use of our alley which, in part due to the commercial and service vehicle traffic is very burdened. Thomas Liquor, while a valued neighbor, has serious traffic on Fridays and Saturdays and rush hours due to its customers. The additional traffic occasioned by this Project will create a very serious impediment to our access and that of our service suppliers.

   Last Tuesday a friend who lives in Bloomington gave me a ride home at 8 p.m. and he

exclaimed upon seeing the cars packed like sardines on Grand: “Wow, there must be several parties going on tonight!” I told him it was the normal parking on Grand.

3. The density of housing on Grand Avenue is well-beyond the norm in the neighborhood both North and South of Grand Avenue. This is evident from the spillover parking on Prior and other neighboring streets. As an example, the blocks on Portland and Ashland have an apartment building, typically two per block, with only three to four stories and only 4-12 units per building and 5-6 houses in between. This is a compatible and livable ratio to maintain a quality of life in the neighborhood. We have 25 apartment buildings on Grand between Fairview and Cleveland Avenues already. The wisdom of zoning in these adjacent locations is being ignored with the density that has developed on Grand Avenue.

4. One needs to consider the context in which this Proposed Project exists. As a very long time resident of Saint Paul I am being barraged by changes that encourage me to leave the City. I have seen my property taxes skyrocket since I have owned my home. They are currently approximate $12,000.00. That friend who gave me a ride pays only $5,000.00 for a larger home in Bloomington. While some may consider Summit Avenue to be of greater value justifying higher taxes, I have to deal with the burden these taxes pose on us. And, I wonder what I receive in exchange for that higher burden. I worry that the decline in downtown Saint Paul and the unfunded liability associated with our streets, some of which still have streetcar rails imbedded (such as Grand Avenue) will overburden me as time goes on. Is Saint Paul pricing itself out of the Market? I have also seen bike paths being proposed that will destroy the ambiance and historical character of our street that is a beautiful asset for Saint Paul and is deservingly world-famous. If this Project is allowed it will be the last straw for me. I came here to have a home that I can enjoy in a neighborhood that safe, accessible and livable. That has and is being destroyed by the City as it encourages higher density.

Thank your for considering my comments.

Best Regards,

-Larry Starns

Larry D. Starns
1950 Summit Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105
Cell: (651) 587-0338
Email: larrystarns@gmail.com

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