

city of saint paul  
planning commission resolution

file number 12-32

date May 18, 2012

WHEREAS, Cullen LLC, File # 12-037-383, has submitted a site plan for review under the provisions of § 61.402 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code for a new apartment building on property located at 2124 - 2130 Grand Ave, legally described as Summit Wood, Lots 31-33; and

WHEREAS, the Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission held a public hearing on April 26, 2012, and May 10, 2012, at which all persons present were given an opportunity to be heard pursuant to said application in accordance with the requirements of § 61.303 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Planning Commission, under the provisions of § 61.402(c), based on the evidence presented to its Zoning Committee at the public hearing as substantially reflected in the minutes, considered and found that the site plan is consistent with the following:

1. *Applicable ordinances of the City of Saint Paul.*

The site plan meets all applicable ordinances including zoning standards for density, building height, setbacks, lot coverage and parking. These standards are reviewed in more detail in Attachment A.

2. *The city's adopted comprehensive plan and development or project plans for sub-areas of the city.*

The comprehensive plan calls for increasing residential density and providing a variety of housing options.

*The Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan:*

- Maps in the Plan show this site in an area along Grand Avenue designated as a Residential Corridor and says "Policies in this strategy direct new, higher density development to Downtown, the Central Corridor, Neighborhood Centers, Residential and Mixed-Use Corridors." Page 8
- "The core goal of Strategy LU-1 ... is higher density development. Higher density means that new residential, commercial and industrial development will be at densities greater than currently found in the community (e.g. ... small apartment buildings, larger scale multi-family apartments and condominiums where there is now small scale housing....)" Page 7
- "Existing zoning standards, as well as new zoning standards and districts, will be used ... to allow higher density in ... Residential ... Corridors." Page 8

moved by Perrus

seconded by Lindeke

in favor 15

against 1 (Nelson)

- The Plan talks about goals for densities
  - "The range of densities permitted by the existing RM districts is 22 units to 54 units per acre. Several multi-family residential developments constructed in the past decade far exceed those densities. Densities of individual projects ranged from 40 units per acre to 90 units per acre. Similar densities in Residential Corridors ... will go far to achieving the objective of compact, mixed use development that supports transit." Page 8
  - "Provide for development of housing in Established Neighborhoods, Residential Corridors and adjacent commercial areas consistent with the prevailing character and overall densities of these areas. The density goals are residential development of 4-30 acres per acre in Residential Corridors...."
  - In comparison, this project has a density of 48 units per acre (based on a lot size of 18,000 square feet) or a density of 29 units per acre (if half the alley and the bonus for underground parking are included in the lot area).

*The Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan:*

"Greater housing density will be the hallmark of the next 20-30 years. This density should be geographically focused on transit and commercial corridors...."

*Macalester Groveland Plan*

The plan says "Maintain the single family character of the district" but also says "Diversify housing to meet the needs of all income levels and lifestyles...." It does not suggest limiting apartment buildings in areas zoned for apartment buildings. It also says "The community believes that surface parking lots are unattractive but that the parking requirements should not be relaxed until viable transit alternatives are in place." The proposed underground parking is consistent with this.

3. *Preservation of unique geologic, geographic or historically significant characteristics of the city and environmentally sensitive areas.*

The plan does not impair any unique geologic or geographic characteristics. The site is a half block from the West Summit Avenue Historic District but it is not located in the District. Some other sites in the area have a "perched water table" and the engineering for the basement level will have to respond to this if the site is determined to have a perched water table.

4. *Protection of adjacent and neighboring properties through reasonable provision for such matters as surface water drainage, sound and sight buffers, preservation of views, light and air, and those aspects of design which may have substantial effects on neighboring land uses.*

The site plan is consistent with this subject to submission of additional information about construction staging, and approval by DSI staff of a plan for staging equipment and materials during construction. The site will be completely excavated for the basement and a so plan is needed to show how construction materials, equipment, vehicles will be stored so they do not unreasonably interfere with the adjacent neighbors.

Stormwater from the site will be directed to the City sewer system and will not drain to adjacent properties. A row of evergreen shrubs is shown along the west property line to act as a buffer for the residential property to the west. The main entrance is located near the corner of Grand and Finn to keep it away from adjacent property.

5. *The arrangement of buildings, uses and facilities of the proposed development in order to assure abutting property and/or its occupants will not be unreasonably affected.*

The building will be set back at least 25 feet from adjacent properties. To limit outside parties or other activities by residents that could create problems, the site does not have an outdoor gathering spot: the green roof will have a fence around it to keep people off of it. One additional step that should be taken to reduce the impact of the project is to relocate some of the windows on the south side of the building to the east side so that they face Finn and not the property across the alley.

6. *Creation of energy-conserving design through landscaping and location, orientation and elevation of structures.*

Providing higher density housing within walking distance of the St. Thomas campus will help to reduce the number of students who need to drive to school. The green roof over the underground parking level in the basement will reduce stormwater run off and help mitigate the urban heat island effect.

7. *Safety and convenience of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic both within the site and in relation to access streets, including traffic circulation features, the locations and design of entrances and exits and parking areas within the site.*

The applicant provided a Traffic Impact Study for the project and it was reviewed by staff from the Traffic Section of Public Works. The number of car trips generated by the building and the location of the driveway are consistent with traffic safety.

The plan is also consistent with the safety and convenience of pedestrians and people riding bikes. To encourage pedestrians to cross Grand at the intersection, the pedestrian route from the public sidewalk to main entrance of the site plan was revised to add an access closer to the corner of Grand and Finn.

8. *The satisfactory availability and capacity of storm and sanitary sewers, including solutions to any drainage problems in the area of the development.*

The site has adequate sewer availability and the site meets the City's requirements for stormwater management. Storm water will be directed to the public storm sewer and will not drain to adjacent properties. The green-roof proposed for the underground parking level will absorb stormwater and reduce the amount of run-off from the site. There are a few technical details that need to be worked out and this should be a condition of site plan approval.

9. *Sufficient landscaping, fences, walls and parking necessary to meet the above objectives.*

- *Landscaping.* The ground level of the site will be a green roof for the underground parking. It will be planted with perennials and ornamental grasses. Trees and shrubs will be planted around the edge of the site.
- *Fences and walls.* The site will have a low wall around parts of it, ranging in height from 0.5' to 2.5'. The site will have an ornamental fence around the green roof to keep people, including residents, from walking on it.
- *Parking.* The site plan shows 40 off-street parking spaces and this meets the minimum required number of parking spaces for an apartment building of this size.
- *Permit parking.* The site is in a permit parking area (near the University of St. Thomas) in which 4 vehicle and 2 visitor permits are normally allowed per household (up to 120 parking permits for the proposed 20-unit building). In other cases where issuing so many permits for particular buildings could make it difficult for neighboring residents to park on the street the number of parking permits issued per household has been restricted. Such a restriction is a reasonable condition for approval of this site plan as well.

- *Bicycle parking.* College students, a primary market for the proposed building, tend to have greater than average bicycle use and ownership. Therefore, requiring the provision of additional bicycle parking is a reasonable condition of site plan approval.

10. *Site accessibility in accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including parking spaces, passenger loading zones and accessible routes.*

The site plan provides a direct accessible route to the main entrance to the building and to the required ADA parking spaces in the basement.

11. *Provision for erosion and sediment control as specified in the Ramsey Erosion Sediment and Control Handbook.*

The site plan includes an erosion/sediment control plan. The entire site will be excavated for the basement and the material will be hauled away so erosion and sediment getting washed away from the site is not a major concern for this project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Saint Paul Planning Commission, under the authority of the City's Legislative Code and based on the above findings, that the application of Cullen LLC for site plan review for a new apartment building at 2124 - 2130 Grand Avenue is hereby approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Parking permits for the building (located in a permit parking area near the University of St. Thomas) shall be limited to no more than one (1) permit for each unit and five (5) permits for general building use. The annual parking permit for each unit shall be issued only after certification by the building owner that at least two (2) underground motor vehicle parking spaces are leased to residents of the unit or that all of the underground parking spaces are leased.
2. At least one parking space shall be provided for shared vehicle parking, and at least one passenger automobile shall be provided and managed by an official car sharing provider for use by residents of the building, unless an official car sharing provider certifies that use of the car would not justify its provision at this location.
3. As many secure bicycle parking spaces shall be provided on site as determined to be practical by site plan review staff: at least 12 / up to 24 in the underground parking garage, and at least 12 / up to 36 in the patio area near the front door.
4. The windows for bedrooms in the southeast corner shall be located on the east building facade facing Finn and not on the south facade facing the alley.
5. Stormwater from the 4 foot landscaped strip along the west property line shall be controlled so that it does not drain to the adjacent property, either by installing drain tile or installing a small retaining wall to change the grade of the area.
6. A final plan for sewers and stormwater management must be approved by Public Works.
7. A plan for staging equipment and materials during construction must be approved by DSI staff.

## ATTACHMENT A

### Zoning

- Property is zoned RM-2 Multiple Family.
- Multi-family residential is a permitted use.

### Student housing moratorium

- This property is in an area where there is currently a moratorium that limits the conversion of one, two and three family dwellings into student housing. However, this moratorium does not cover new construction.
- The moratorium also limits the residents to no more than 3 unrelated people. However, this project is exempt because the moratorium does not apply to properties pending sale on 8/5/11 and that is the case here.

### Lot size

- *Lot area* 18,000 square feet (120 ft. on Grand) x 150 ft. on Finn) as shown on the survey submitted by the applicant.
- *Half the alley can be included* 1,200 square feet (10' x 120') "In calculating the area of a lot that adjoins a dedicated public alley, for the purpose of applying lot area and density requirements, one-half the width of such alley adjoining the lot shall be considered as part of the lot." Section 66.231.b
- *Bonus lot area for structured parking* 11,100 square feet (37 structured parking spaces x 300 square feet.) Sec. 66.231.c. says "In calculating the area of a lot for the purpose of applying the minimum lot area per unit requirement, the lot area figure may be increased by three hundred (300) square feet for each parking space (up to two (2) parking spaces per unit) within a multiple-family structure or otherwise completely underground.
- *Total lot area for computing density* 30,300 square feet (18,000 + 1,200 + 11,100)

### Density

- *Minimum lot size per unit* 1,500 square feet in the RM2 zoning district (Section. 66.231).
- *Lot size for determining density* 30,300 square feet (lot area + half the alley + the bonus for structured parking)
- *Maximum number of units allowed* 20 units (30,300 square feet / 1500 square feet/unit)

### Maximum building height

- *Maximum height permitted* 5 stories and 50 feet (Sec 66.231) measured from the established grade to the surface of the roof. Parapets, cornices etc. may extend above this height. (Sec. 60.203) Mechanical equipment service stacks, tanks, ventilation equipment, chimneys, church spires, flag poles, public monuments and similar equipment are exempt from maximum height (Sec. 63.102)
- *Proposed building height* 50'

### Setbacks and lot coverage

- *Maximum lot coverage by the building* In residential districts, principal structures shall not cover more than 35% of the zoning lot. (Section 66.232)
- *Lot coverage for this project* 34% ( 6485 sf / 19,200 sf)

### **Setbacks**

- Setbacks are "measured from the lot line to the above-grade faces of the building." Section 60.220.s
- *Front yard setback* A minimum of 22' is required based on the average setback of the existing structures on the block per Section 66.231.g The proposed front yard setback from Grand is 23.3'
- *Side yard:* A minimum setback of 1/2 the height of the building is required per Sec 66.231. The height of the proposed building is 50' and so the minimum sideyard setback is 25'. The proposed sideyard setbacks are 25'
- *Rear yard:* A minimum setback of 25 ft is required per Sec 66.231. The proposed rear yard setback is 32'

### **Parking**

- *Minimum required off-street parking for a 20 4-bedroom apartments* 40 parking spaces (20 units x 2 per dwelling unit Sec. 63.207)
- *Accessible Parking:* 2 accessible spaces (for a parking facility with 26 to 50 parking spaces Section 63.213)
- *Minimum required bicycle parking:* 3 bicycle parking spaces (1 per 14 units Section 63.210)

### **Loading**

- An off-street loading area is not required for multi-family buildings and none is shown on the site plan.

**Building design standards:** The building meets the design standards for new construction in Section 63.110:

- A primary entrance of principal structures shall be located within the front third of the structure; be delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features; and have a direct pedestrian connection to the street. In addition, for one- and two-family dwellings, a primary entrance shall either: 1) face an improved abutting street; or 2) be located off of a front porch, foyer, courtyard, or similar architectural feature, and set back at least eight (8) feet from the side lot line.
- For principal buildings ... above grade window and door openings shall comprise at least fifteen (15) percent of the total area of exterior walls facing a public street or sidewalk. In addition, for new principal residential buildings, above grade window and door openings shall comprise at least ten (10) percent of the total area of all exterior walls.
- Building materials and architectural treatments used on sides of buildings facing an abutting public street should be similar to those used on principal facades.
- The visibility of rooftop mechanical equipment shall be reduced through such means as location, screening, or integration into the roof design. Screening shall be of durable, permanent materials that are compatible with the primary building materials. Exterior mechanical equipment such as ductwork shall not be located on primary building facades.



CITY OF SAINT PAUL  
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

375 Jackson Street, Suite 220  
St Paul, Minnesota 55101-1806

Telephone: 651-266-8989  
Facsimile: 651-266-9124  
Web: [www.stpaul.gov/dsi](http://www.stpaul.gov/dsi)

May 13, 2012

Graham Merry  
Cullen LLC  
PO Box 16725  
Minneapolis MN 55416

**RE: Site Plan 12-037383**  
**Extension of time for review**  
**Grand Finn student apartment at 2124 Grand Avenue**

Dear Mr. Merry:

*This letter is to inform you that the City is extending the site plan review period to 7/25/12.*

You applied submitted an application for Site Plan Review on 3/26/12. Minnesota law gives the City 60 days to complete its review of a zoning application but allows the City to "extend the time line ... by providing written notice of the extension to the applicant. The notification must state the reasons for the extension and its anticipated length, which may not exceed 60 days unless approved by the applicant." Minn. Stat. ' 15.99 (1995)

The 60 day review period ends on 5/26/12. The City is extending the site plan review period for an additional 60 days to 7/25/12.

The extension is needed because the project is controversial and therefore is being reviewed by the Planning Commission. Their decision is subject to appeal to the City Council and if there is an appeal, this will take additional time.

If you have any questions, you can reach me at 651-266-9086 or [tom.beach@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:tom.beach@ci.stpaul.mn.us).

Sincerely,

Tom Beach  
Zoning Specialist