

Tom Beach
Department of Safety and Inspections
375 Jackson Street, Suite 220
Saint Paul, MN 55101

June 14, 2012

Dear Tom,

I am opposed to the development of the properties at 2124-2130 Grand Avenue as proposed (5 stories, 50 ft, 20 units). Such a project will have a dramatic, negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood in terms of traffic, noise, parking problems, neighborhood privacy, storm water runoff, and general livability of the area. I consider the proposal as an "opportunistic action" to 1) the University of St. Thomas' failure to provide the on-campus housing described in the 2004 CUP on the block north of Grand Avenue and 2) the current moratorium on conversion of existing homes to student rental. I agree that student housing alternatives are needed. However, this level of development, and others that will likely follow, requires comprehensive and thoughtful planning.

Specifically, I have strong disagreements with 4/17/2012 Zoning Committee Staff Report Section H. Findings, Item 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 report claims "The site plan meets this finding". I am curious how this finding was arrived at in light of:

- 1) Population density will increase by 7 fold at a minimum (current density of 12 persons for both 2124 and 2130 to a minimum of 80 persons with the project). Obviously the potential noise, parking, traffic, and other issues relating to enjoyment of our property will be affected. **This is the equivalent of placing 20 homes worth of students on a 120 ft x 150 ft lot.** To say the neighbors next door and behind the alley are not "unreasonably affected" ignores the obvious.
- 2) A fifty foot high, five story building greatly reduces the privacy of using our backyards and the back rooms of our home as we currently do. Currently, our garage and minimal hedging allows us to have a reasonable level of privacy. See the attached figures for a realistic view from my back porch I did some quick calculations, assuming the apartment building's 32 ft setback from the alley and a fifth floor window at 40 feet above the ground, I would need a fence a minimum of 20 feet tall to restrict a renter's view into our kitchen dining area. Keeping blinds closed 24-hrs a day or installing translucent glass in my window, as the developer suggested during one public hearing, is not a rational idea.

I also have strong concerns with Item 8 which deals with stormwater runoff control. As a Registered Professional Civil Engineer, I have worked in watershed planning and floodwater control design (hydrology and hydraulics) for over 25 years and am very familiar with the rainfall/runoff process. **The statement "The green-roof proposed for the underground parking level will absorb stormwater and reduce the amount of run-off from the site" is misleading. It is only valid when comparing a green roof to an impervious roof. When the other site changes are considered, this project will greatly increase runoff from the site.** In addition, some calculations show that roofing and other impervious areas will go from 4,400 sq ft (two existing homes, 3 garages, and concrete parking pad) to 9,165 sq ft (apartment proper roof + parking down ramp) – **a 210% increase in impervious area.** An additional 9,880 sq ft will go from a typical lawn to the "green roof" (a concrete deck, covered with a waterproof

membrane, followed by 8" of soil then sod will produce at least 2-3 times more runoff than an average lawn). **On a 10-yr event, the runoff will increase by approximately 1,750 cubic feet.** If the plan is to use 3' diameter pipes to store extra runoff and meter it out slowly, over 250 feet would be required. It is not clear from the plans how much is planned but I suspect it is less. Also, this doesn't address larger runoff events. **Storm water aspects were not given adequate consideration during site plan review.** I would be happy to share the technical background to these numbers if the City Engineers are interested.

On May 10, the Zoning Board voted to deny this project after carefully reviewing documents and hearing lengthy testimony from neighbors and a representative of the MacGroveland Community Council. However, on May 18, the Full Planning Commission, without the benefit of sufficient time to properly examine all the issues, voted to approve this project. The neighborhood promptly filed an appeal to the City Council on this in the hope that a decision be made that is not strictly based on technical limits of an out-dated (1970's) zoning code but considers impacts on the neighborhood and compatibility with the city's comprehensive plan, the MacGroveland Community Council land use plan, and the 2004 UST CUP. We do not accept the argument that "you can't have it both ways" with regard to this project in light of the ongoing student housing ordinance debate. We are willing to do our part to accept increased density but going from 12 residents to 80 residents (guaranteed to be students based on the apartments design features) is too much of a hit to absorb.

A copy of the petition opposing this development that was signed by 96 individuals and represents over 75% of the owner/occupied homes in the two blocks directly south (Lincoln and Goodrich between Cleveland and Cretin) has been delivered to Councilmember Russ Stark's office. The neighborhood is appalled that the city is considering approving a structure of this size and has expressed this in the form of this petition, several neighborhood meetings, letters and emails to the zoning board, and public testimony by several people thus far at 2 zoning meetings. On the reverse are a few visuals that show the overwhelming impact this proposal would have on the neighborhood.

We hope that you will be able to take the time to carefully review all details of this appeal and do what is best for the neighborhood. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pete Cooper
2129 Lincoln Avenue



Figure 1 - Architect's Bird's Eye View Looking West Along Grand



Figure 2 - Before and After Views from 2129 Lincoln Backyard