District 1 Community Council

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Saint Paul Planning Commission
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
Saint Paul, MN 55102

May 4, 2015

Re: Changes to Residential Design Standards

The District 1 Community Council does not believe that the proposed residential design standards should be applied city-wide until a thorough study of the implications and suitability of the standards for different neighborhoods has been thoroughly studied. There has been a thorough study done of the implications and suitability for Ward 3, but the history of the development of other neighborhoods means that the same issues found in Ward 3 do not apply elsewhere.

We urge the Planning Commission to reconsider how it will implement the standards that are proposed.

Sincerely,

Betsy Leach
For the District 1 Community Council Land Use Committee

West Side Community Organization
1 W Water St, Suite 260
St. Paul, MN 55107
Tel: 651-293-1708
Fax: 651-293-0115

May 8, 2015

To whom it may concern:

The Riverfront, Development, and Land Use Committee of West Side Community Organization voted unanimously at our April meeting to request more time to review and participate in the residential standards zoning code amendments process. Every district council should have a chance to participate in this process. Impacts on a diverse range of neighborhoods can vary greatly and engagement in one corner of the City does not equal engagement in another. We respect the work done by Macalester Groveland and Highland Park, but request a slowdown in the implementation of city wide standards so that the West Side can better understand potential ramifications for our neighborhood.

If there are any questions regarding this recommendation, please contact WSCO staff.

Thank you,

Mason Wells

WSCO Community Organizer
651-293-1708
mason@wsco.org

West 7th/Fort Road Federation
974 West 7th Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

651-298-5599
FortRoadFederation.org

May 6, 2015

Mr. Mike Richardson
City of St. Paul Planning and Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street
Saint Paul, MN 55101

RE: Residential Design Standards Zoning Study

Dear Mr. Richardson,

The Residential Design Standards Zoning Study suggests that there is an upsurge in residential investment concentrated in Ward 3. This upswing is evidenced by the sheer number of residential permits - new construction, additions and accessory buildings - in Ward 3 as compared to the rest of the city. Specifically, please note that 39.7% of single family addition permits issued in 2014 fell within Ward 3.

The Fort Road Federation recognizes that other neighborhoods in Saint Paul, beyond Ward 3, also have concerns about infill and residential expansion projects. However, in addressing these challenges the city must strike a balance between improving the existing housing stock with increased investment and respecting the current character of a neighborhood.

In Ward 2 we are dealing with degenerating housing stock, a high level of rental homes, registered and unregistered vacant houses and empty lots of land suitable for building. While regulation may be warranted to address our situation, we do not want to unreasonably burden potential investment in our district.

Therefore, the Federation supports immediate action to undertake zoning changes recommended for Ward 3. Once these parameters are in place, we plan to monitor the effect in Ward 3 in order to make exacting determination which regulation would be suitable to govern and shape the improvement of Ward 2. Specifically, we anticipate addressing the concerns on the height and scale within our established neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn P. Devine
Board President
Fort Road Federation

D11

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Michael Jon Olson <michaeljon@hamlinemidway.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2015 12:47 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Request for Extension of Comment Period on Residential Zoning Design Standards

Mike,

Thanks for your time on the phone this morning.

Hamline Midway Coalition/District Council 11 respectfully requests an extension of the comment period for the Residential Standards Zoning Study. Given HMC's meeting schedule and when we received notice of this issue, HMC requests that the comment period be extended at least 30 days.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Jon Olson
Executive Director
Hamline Midway Coalition/District Council 11
michaeljon@hamlinemidway.org
www.hamlinemidway.org
651-494-7682

UNION PARK DISTRICT COUNCIL
1602 Selby Avenue, Suite 10, Saint Paul, MN 55104
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An Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Employer

April 21, 2015

Mike Richardson
Planning & Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street
City of Saint Paul
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Dear Mike,

Thank you for presenting at the Union Park District Council Land Use Committee, at its April 20, 2015 meeting, on the Residential Design Standards draft.

After a discussion with the Committee members and residents, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the city **delay the hearing and decision-making process** on the Residential Design Standards for three months to give each District Council and Ward time to review the issue, and to give the city more time to evaluate and communicate the implications of the standards to residents.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Julie Reiter
Executive Director
Union Park District Council

Macalester Groveland
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

320 South Griggs Street
St. Paul, MN 55105
www.macgrove.org

Phone: 651-695-4000
Fax: 651-695-4004
E-mail: mgcc@macgrove.org

May 7, 2015

Mike Richardson
City Planner
Planning & Economic Development
25 W. 4th St., Suite 1300
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mike,

Please consider the following recommendations / comments from the Housing and Land Use Committee of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council, (the "HLU") as you continue your work on the Residential Design Standards Zoning Study (the "Study"). Some are general, others are specific, all are intended to strengthen and improve the City of Saint Paul and its unique neighborhoods.

1) The HLU recommends that the City of Saint Paul view the Study as a first step in a broader process. In particular, while the HLU appreciates the time and effort that has been invested in the Study, we hope that these changes are viewed as the groundwork for design standards that would also address aesthetics and building materials. This objective is supported by item 3.4 in the City of Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan, which states:

> *3.4 Prepare citywide infill housing design standards so that infill housing fits within the context of existing neighborhoods and is compatible with the prevailing pattern of development.*

2) The HLU recommends adoption of the recommendations included in the Study. If the Planning Commission determines that additional study is needed before adopting the Study's recommendations City-wide, then the HLU further recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the Study's recommendations as an overlay district for Ward 3 while the additional study is completed.

3) Regarding Sec. 63.110 – Building design standards, the HLU recommends that the City collect and review data to determine whether requiring that 10% of building's total exterior area be devoted to windows / doors is sufficient to match the current character of the neighborhood.

4) Regarding Sec. 63.110 – Building design standards, Note (g), the HLU recommends that language in the section be simplified, to reduce complexity and the likelihood of confusion in interpretation and implementation.

5) Regarding Sec. 63.110 – Building design standards, Note (l), the HLU recommends that the City collect and review data to assess the feasibility of applying Context Sensitive Height restrictions more broadly, and not only for houses over a certain height.

6) Regarding Sec. 66.232 – Maximum lot coverage, the HLU recommends that, for properties that are adjacent to more than one alley, the lot coverage calculation include only ½ the width of the shorter of said alleys. The implications of the current lot coverage calculation are illustrated by City Staff's comments regarding the property currently under construction at 1623 James Avenue:

> This property is located on a "T" alley, so using half the alley width on both sides of the lot results in a total lot area of 6528 square feet. Under the current zoning code, which caps lots [sic] coverage of principal structure [sic] at 35%, the maximum home size would be 2285 square feet. The footprint of the home currently under construction, which is widely viewed to be substantially oversized for the lot and surrounding area, is 1972 square feet.

Including only the shorter of the two alleys adjacent to 1623 James Avenue in the lot coverage calculation would reduce the maximum footprint of the home, and prevent the construction of oversized homes.

7) Regarding Sec. 66.234 – Sidewall Articulation, the HLU recommends that the City consider the potential for unintended consequences if this provision is applied to additions to or renovations of existing non-conforming structures. The HLU is concerned that this provision may discourage appropriately scaled remodeling by current homeowners who wish to update and remain in their homes. The HLU is hopeful, however, that the City will consider modifications to the zoning code as needed to address such unintended consequences as they arise.

Thank you again for your continued work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Liz Boyer
Executive Director

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Kathy Carruth <hdc@visi.com>
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2015 11:03 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Drummond, Donna (CI-StPaul); Kantner, Libby (CI-StPaul); Amy Salmela; Tia Anderson
Subject: HDC Resolution on Residential Design Standards
Attachments: Final Resolution Residential Design Standards.pdf

Mike,

Please see the attached resolution from the Highland District Council regarding the proposed changes to the City's Residential Design Standards.

If you could please forward this email to anyone that I missed, it would be appreciated.

Thank you so much for all of your time on this issue,

Kathy

--
Kathy Carruth
Executive Director
Highland District Council
651.695.4005
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Like Us On Facebook! Highland District Council
<="" a="">"

HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Building a More Vibrant, Welcoming, and Safe Neighborhood

Resolution in Support of Ward 3 Design Standards

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul City Council requested a study of the Residential Design Standards in August of 2014 and the Planning and Economic Development approved a study of Ward 3 residential Design Standards; and

WHEREAS, the Highland District Council discussed this issue at the Community Development Committee (CDC) meetings on May 20, 2014 and August 19th , 2014 and held Community input meetings with City Planner, Mike Richardson, on October 13, 2014, January 20, 2015 and March 18, 2015; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Highland District Council supports residential design standards as put forth by city staff, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Highland District Council advocates that the Residential Design Standards be applied city wide, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Highland District Council advocates for DSI staffing and funding for enforcement of the City of St Paul's zoning code.

Approved on May 1, 2015
By the Highland District Council Board of Directors

Resolution 2015 – 10D

Summit Hill Association

District 16 Planning Council
860 Saint Clair Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
Telephone 651-222-1222
www.summithillassociation.org
summithill@visi.com

May 5, 2015

TO: City of St. Paul Planning Commission
RE: Residential Design Standards Zoning Study, and proposed City-wide zoning amendments.

The Summit Hill Association / District 16 Planning Council hosted a Zoning and Land Use Committee Meeting on Tuesday, April 28th, for the purpose of learning more about the proposed zoning changes.

Mike Richardson from the City of St. Paul Planning Department was kind enough to provide us with a high level walk through of the proposed changes, as well as answer questions from residents in attendance.

The study done for Ward 3 has been extensive, and was put together with considerable input from the neighborhood during a 12-month process.

The residents in District 16 have had only a short time (4-weeks) from when the planning commission released its report, in order to review and try to understand how these changes may affect the our neighborhood and the housing stock that is present in our district.

The meeting was very informative, but also left many with unanswered questions, and an overall sense that there has been a rush to bring things together to make this a city wide change and that it might not be appropriate for District 16. There was a majority view that a "one size fits all" ordinance may not work for the Summit Hill Neighborhood because of the significantly different housing stock.

It is the feeling of the Summit Hill Association, through the consultation with the neighborhood that the process to enact these changes city-wide has occurred too quickly, and that more time is required to analyze its effect on our neighborhood.

There is a desire by many in our neighborhood to have a voice in what changes may occur, and whether they are appropriate for all aspects of the city.

Summit Hill Association / District 16 Planning Council

Residential Zoning Standards

What do you think of the proposed residential design and dimensional requirements for new construction?

All On Forum Statements sorted chronologically

As of May 12, 2015, 3:51 PM

As with any public comment process, participation in Open Saint Paul is voluntary. The statements in this record are not necessarily representative of the whole population, nor do they reflect the opinions of any government agency or elected officials.

Residential Zoning Standards

What do you think of the proposed residential design and dimensional requirements for new construction?

As of May 12, 2015, 3:51 PM, this forum had:

Attendees:	244
On Forum Statements:	27
All Statements:	35
Hours of Public Comment:	1.8

This topic started on April 7, 2015, 8:54 AM.

All On Forum Statements sorted chronologically

Jenni Ryan inside Ward 2 May 11, 2015, 4:23 PM

I attended the meeting on May 8th. From that, I feel there are several issues.

1. Ward 3 - they've clearly done a thorough study and have reached a plan with citizen input. Their proposals should be implemented now.

2. Moratorium on tear-down permits - if there is a way to separate permits applied for by developers vs. prospective owners, then I would be in favor of a moratorium on these permits for developers. It seems that most of the problems have been created by developers building spec homes for a quick turnaround profit.

3. I am not in favor of adopting any requirements citywide at this time. Each neighborhood needs a chance to develop their own standards. I live in Crocus Hill. As was pointed out, a height limit of 24 feet should not apply here. I am in favor of tabling the issue for a year to allow the neighborhood councils to develop their proposals.

Julian Sellers inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 4:19 PM

I strongly support the proposed guidelines for Ward 3, and ask that they be implemented immediately in Ward 3. We are witnessing the beginning of a downward spiral in the quality of this amazingly attractive neighborhood. Because they create nuisances and destroy the irreplaceable character of the neighborhood, the teardowns and thoughtless construction will cause more and more people to sell out to the quick-buck artists.

In a civilized society, all people, institutions, and businesses live with regulations. The interests of the citizens who have made our neighborhoods so desirable surely need protection from the wanton, destructive actions that are being allowed in the name of individual rights.

Our neighborhood contains a hugely valuable resource of high-quality homes for middle-class families. A city that claims to be the most livable city in America and that claims to promote sustainability would not allow the destruction of this resource. Our city council and city staff need to recognize what is at stake, and develop some spine in creating and enforcing standards.

1 Supporter

Peter Bell inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 3:49 PM

I completely support a moratorium on tear downs in Ward 3 until the proposed residential design & dimensional requirements can be reviewed, ratified and adopted.
Recent tear downs in Ward 3 have not been a net improvement to the neighborhood and have enriched developers at the expense of the neighboring homes. Most of the newly build homes are excessively large compared to neighbor homes and attempt to maximize the square footage at the expense neighbors access to sunlight, breezes and sightlines (feeling boxed in). The tear down & rebuild at 1623 James Ave should be a

case study. This home is slated to be 3,000+ square feet when completed. Whereas, neighbor homes are 800 to 1900 square feet. The tear down & rebuilt home is more than two to three times the size of common neighbor homes!

1 Attachment

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/135e26l1s3bk.52i/IMG_1231.JPG (2.23 MB)

1 Supporter

Andrea Perzichilli inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 3:46 PM

Please see my attached letter.

Thank you,
Andrea Perzichilli
651-497-7478

1 Attachment

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/135e3327c880.599/Aperzichilli_letter_5-11-15.pdf (235 KB)

Jen Pettit inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 3:41 PM

I looked at probably close to 50 houses before I found my current house in Mac-Groveland. Some were too big and some were too small. But we eventually found one that was just right.

I believe the city needs to balance the needs of changing demographics and architecture trends while preserving our neighborhoods. Further, until a middle ground is reached there should be a moratorium on new permits.

"Quality of life" issues were used to implement rental resitrictions in our neighborhoods and this issue is no different. Whether you live next door, down the block or are a casual walker down the street these teardowns affect each and every one of us.

Winston Kaehler inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 2:31 PM

In my spoken statement at the Commission meeting on May 8, I neglected to include a concern that proposed new construction codes should include revised regulations on exterior infrastructure such as air conditioning and heating equipment, especially relating to noise issues. Because of being greatly enlarged, the rebuilt house next to mine had to relocate the air conditioning unit to right outside my bedroom window. As result, I

can no longer open the window or install a window air conditioner and must keep a storm window on in order to sleep at night in warmer months (a significant loss of enjoyment of my one-story house). The more-or-less constant noise is also annoying in my back deck and yard area. In addition, the greatly increased roof area of the rebuilt house may also be a factor in flaking off of my basement wall facing the new house, as no runoff gutters were installed on that side of the house. As there is no chimney on the new house, the house on the other side of it has constant noise from heating equipment vents (less of a problem than AC because windows are closed during winter months). When I moved into my house 37 years ago, one could see the sky out both sides of it. Now the sky is visible only out the front and the back windows.

Lyn Bartholomayu inside Ward 3 May 11, 2015, 1:59 PM

Yes, there need to be some changes made. It is ridiculous the size of the homes that are being built on the small lots in Ward 4 and or St. Paul for that matter. It takes away air, light and privacy to the neighbors next to the new construction. It also changes the culture of the block having these new, larger homes present.

Jen Edgerton inside Ward 1 May 10, 2015, 7:38 PM

I think the intended and unintended effects of these standards are difficult for a layperson (me) to understand. It is vital that you share with citizens some examples of what would be allowed and what would not be allowed, otherwise you discourage people from commenting. It seems like property owners have more feedback on whether their neighbors can have chickens in Saint Paul than on major changes to a neighbor's property. (http://ci.stpaul.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/61891). I am in Ward 1. Their are two American foursquare houses that have had a third floor added. These are ugly eyesores. I support any code that prevents this type of housing mutation. I think houses of different architectural styles should be allowed in neighborhoods, but should be consistent in size to already existing houses.

1 Supporter

Jim Maranda inside Ward 3 May 10, 2015, 7:26 PM

When my wife and I go for walks, we notice all the new houses that have been built. Some are well done, a lot are not. Ultra modern style houses that flat out clash with the surrounding houses, not only from a style standpoint but from size as well. It's the poor guy next door to one of these beasts that ultimately takes the hit when trying to have a vegetable garden or selling the house. It would be one thing if individuals sought and bought the property. I would bet houses would be of more reasonable size. To me it's a "pump em out big and fast" attitude that pushes the limit on existing codes

2 Supporters

Elizabeth Karre inside Ward 1 May 10, 2015, 8:51 AM

The teardowns of non-dilapidated homes and the ease of attaining a demo permit is my biggest concern. It is

well-expressed in the study: "The main concerns are a loss of small housing stock for an aging population, the unnecessary waste of energy due to the loss of embodied energy in a functioning house and the energy required to replace it." Could restrictions be put in place that require before attaining a demo permit, it must be proved that a house is in certain degree of bad condition? Or that it is not sellable in its current condition (by showing it has been on the market for x amount of time at a price that is within a market-based price range)?

1 Supporter

Justine Lee inside Ward 3 May 9, 2015, 8:47 PM

I'm the cute small tiny house (800 sq foot) next to the beast at 1623 (not 1621) James and HATE the new Delta hanger next to my house. We get absolutely no sun in our garden anymore, and now all we can see is the beast. The whole neighborhood hates it. Shame on Westar homes for being so greedy and wanting to sell this for $700,000 (in a neighborhood of $200-250K). With the recent rainfall, we had huge puddles in our yard due to the changed grade. Either deal with new code, or prepare for class action lawsuits from the neighborhood.

1 Attachment

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1358lo8n8hmo.6vn/1621_James.jpg (1010 KB)

5 Supporters

Roy Neal inside Ward 4 May 9, 2015, 4:03 PM

I agree with many of the folks posting statements. The city needs zoning requirements that keep pace with development trends, and actually work to protect what makes St. Paul neighborhoods unique. Quick-moving developers and their legal reps have found ways to undermine the spirit of zoning requirements, and continue to build inappropriately sized and sited buildings in venerable St. Paul neighborhoods. Developers seem to be one step ahead of the city. A revamp is needed, and I am 100% in favor of new zoning designed to protect and enhance our existing housing stock.

Meaningful, effective protection for historic homes is also a necessity. Right now, it is easier for an out-of-town developer to swoop in and tear down a century old home without a second thought than it is to get a variance for a new garage. Something is very wrong there.

The city should encourage and reward smart, thoughtful rehabilitation and development, not build-and-go lot speculators, and uninformed design. Design standards are a critical step in the right direction. Bad remodeling jobs ("remuddles") are rampant in ward 4. Most were done years ago, but a few beautiful homes were recently marred by poor aesthetic design choices—replacing quality, original arched and triptych windows with over-sized generic vinyl sliding windows, for example (see before & after photos). This may seem judgmental, and it is subjective, but it's hard to argue that inexpensive vinyl sliders on a signature 1890s Queen Anne home are a good option, and I'm sure the homeowners would have appreciated some design guidance that could have suggested alternatives. These changes were rolled out piecemeal, so the damage happened slowly. I'd hope design guidelines would prevent this slow degradation of a home's character.

We are at the beginning of a wave of teardowns and thoughtless, insensitive development. The city seems

powerless to do much about it, and city staffers have said they need more, more effective tools to do their jobs effectively. The tear downs in the last few months are just the start, as St. Paul has finally caught the eye of the Build-and-Run development crowd. Design standards, working with improved zoning, would offer some protection against generic, over-sized, sun-blocking monsters that look as if they came from a $3 house plan book from Cub Foods. I know that design is subjective, but it's also critical to our quality of life; design affects us every day; it can be the difference between a good or bad day; it is the difference between a place that feels warm and welcoming, and one that feels cold and forbidding.

Most new-built homes look like copy-cat suburban tract homes transplanted, and feel out of place in urban St. Paul neighborhoods. Often with only a thin veneer of maintenance-free character, they are poor mimicry of the homes they destroy. Design standards may not fully address that issue, but it would prevent some of the bland boxes going up in Ward 4 today. (see photo). Without new standards and ENFORCEMENT, laze faire building and the generic designs inflicted on us will do long-term harm and suck value out of all of our neighborhoods.

That said, I think applying one set of design standards to the entire city would be a mistake. Each neighborhood has its own unique character, challenges, and goals so each should decide its own standards through a community-driven, collaborative process. The ward 3 standards could serve as a starting point. Perhaps there are commonalities in the design standard that should apply city-wide, such as historic preservation-oriented guidelines that apply to certain styles of homes that were built city-wide, but I'd say let neighbors decide the details locally.

Whatever is decided, new standards for each ward should be rolled out very quickly if we are to stem the tide of bad development. If this process drags out for years, then it will be a lost opportunity to preserve what makes St. Paul, well, St. Paul.

Roy Neal
Ward 4

5 Attachments

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1357w1pom0ts.4f4/Bland_New_Home_Ward4.jpg (143 KB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1357yn3a5sf4.4oz/Front_Before.jpg (181 KB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1357yne18kj4.1sx/Front_After.jpg (107 KB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1357yy55ryj4.4sq/Side_Before.jpg (211 KB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1357yye58ga8.6xv/Side_After.jpg (175 KB)

9 Supporters

Michael Wilson inside Ward 3 May 9, 2015, 12:26 PM

I support a moratorium on tear-downs within Ward 3 until better guidelines can be developed to protect smaller first-family homes and insure new-builds meet some type of architectural review to better match the existing neighborhoods. Perhaps future guidelines could limit the percentage increase in square footage when older homes are torn down.

3 Supporters

Marge Wherley inside Ward 3 May 9, 2015, 10:31 AM

I like the idea of the setbacks, mass, height and other criteria being proposed. These requirements would have prevented the most egregious new constructions I have seen. I see no reason why so-called "market demand" should continue to dictate the future of our neighborhoods and requirements like these make sense while still allowing considerable flexibility. "Style" is an issue that I hope will not be regulated in the future. My nightmare would be that every detail of materials and aesthetics would become the source of endless debate, pitting neighbor against neighbor, adding unnecessary costs to the city and the homeowner for every small improvement. When I moved to Mac-Groveland 23 years ago, I bought a home that had been absentee-landlord rental property for sixty years. It had deteriorated to the point that a neighbor had actually removed a window that faced the property. It has taken 23 years, tons of sweat equity and everything but my retirement fund to improve the building. I would not have been able to afford to live in this neighborhood any other way. I would like to be sure others in my situation have a chance to move into Mac-Groveland without being priced out due to additional design restrictions, bureaucracy and costs. I am not so worried about enticing households who would require a McMansion to deign to live in our neighborhood. They have plenty of decent neighborhoods with huge houses to choose from.

1 Supporter

Linda Winsor inside Ward 2 May 9, 2015, 8:14 AM

Ward 3 is experiencing teardowns, partial teardowns, lot splits, and new mcmansion construction at very alarming rates and the design standards are a step in the right direction towards working to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods in Mac Groveland and HIghland Park.
I live in Ward 2 and am very concerned about the necessity of taking steps to preserve and enhance all of our Saint Paul neighborhoods. My Summit Hill neighborhood is also experiencing some of the same issues that Ward 3 has addressed. For example, within the last 2 years, there have been 3 teardowns within 2 blocks of my home---the most recent being 27 Crocus Place 3 days ago. In addition, there was 1 lot split and construction of a new home in the last year and across the street from that new house is another expected teardown, lot split, and 2 new houses to fill each lot. Finally, there is a house on the market that lists a teardown and new house on the MLS listing. Although my neighborhood is experiencing some of the same issues as Ward 3 regarding teardowns, lot splits, and new construction, the Ward 3 Design Standards do not thoroughly address some of the issues in my neighborhood. For example, the Ward 3 Design Standards address height maximums, but what about a height minimum standard? Many blocks in my neighborhood would need a minimum of 2 stories to be consistent with the character of the facing and adjacent blocks.
While Ward 3 is overdue for implementation of design standards to begin to address their neighborhoods' issues, the proposed Ward 3 Design Standards have not been developed with other Saint Paul neighborhoods' in mind, nor have they been tested beyond Ward 3. Therefore, I would highly recommend that the Planning Commission not adopt the Ward 3 Design Standards for city-wide application at this time and allow Ward 2 and other Wards to study, develop, and test design standards that would address their neighborhoods' issues.

Meg Arnosti inside Ward 3 May 9, 2015, 7:25 AM

The guidelines by Mike Richardson do not go far enough. The addition in the attached photo is an example of construction that blocks the back yards of two neighbors and degrades their quality of life. The neighbors are not on speaking terms. A tear-down or an addition needs to be a variance requiring neighborhood input. The

owners were not required to notify anyone of their plans! Homes should not be allowed to significantly change the character of a neighbor's property. There should be regulations so that a new home or addition cannot be significantly larger than adjacent homes. In addition, we need to have the ability to create Conservation Districts that are specific to neighborhoods. We cannot have a "one size fits all" approach. I support passing Mike Richardson's guidelines for Ward 3, but want additional regulations that give neighbors more say.

2 Attachments

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1356w6bno7yo.3lq/Mt._Curve_1.JPG (2.61 MB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1356w8q6cc00.4pz/Mt._Curve_2.JPG (2.88 MB)

4 Supporters

Nancy Newman inside Ward 3 May 8, 2015, 9:44 PM

It seems urgent that we amend building codes, to require attention to the "commons" in our communities. All the people who live in a neighborhood are affected by the changes that teardowns and new buildings can bring. I support limits on the size and shape of new construction so that neighbors are not unduly impacted in the amount of sunlight, open space, and architectural character of our communities.

5 Supporters

Ann Nerland inside Ward 2 May 8, 2015, 4:39 PM

It is true, Ward 3 seems to have a problem with tear downs. This should have been addressed much earlier, and I'm glad there is a discussion now. That being said, I think we tread a fine line between government enforcement of design standards and discussion among neighbors about what is acceptable in each neighborhood. Some of St. Paul's most beautiful homes were built by some of the most creative architects of the time. Most neighborhoods have evolved and don't represent any one particular style of architecture. What do you suppose Frank Lloyd Wright would say about these standards? I can guess. In my opinion, Ward 3 needs to have a moratorium on any tear downs until it is decided how to proceed. Whatever design standards are developed need to be skeletal. I would also encourage the city to look at the number of variances granted. Design requirements are meaningless if they aren't adhered to.
In my opinion these guidelines should most definitely NOT be extended city-wide. This is a process that deserves the input and thoughtful consideration of many citizens, and to rush this process through would be a disservice to the residents of St. Paul.

Bethany Gladhill inside Ward 1 May 7, 2015, 1:35 PM

I think this is a very complex situation that, for whatever reason, is being rushed through on a citywide basis without a chance for most neighborhoods to adequately review or discuss the proposed changes. Most citizens I have talked to are unaware of the initiative at all. I think most residents would expect a change of this scale to be well-studied and included in the Comprehensive Plan, which I believe is not scheduled to be updated until 2018.

In Ward 3, there has been a lot of research, community activism, thought, and activity around the plan, and a real sense of urgency as many homes in that are are threatened. As initially proposed, the plan would have been an overlay over Ward 3 and part of Ward 4. Why not let it move forward for that community as a pilot project, and then move it forward citywide by the next comprehensive plan updates? That would allow for much more true grassroots participation, and bring in important aspects such as historic preservation.

1 Supporter

Bill Slobotski inside Ward 3 May 7, 2015, 9:08 AM

Please go to the behemoth at 1621 James Ave (see attached picture) and see the house that is taking up the WHOLE lot, blocking all light from the house east of it, and rewrite the code to make sure this never happens again. Please go to the house at 1780 James and see how close it is built to the house to the east, see how water off its roof could almost hit the roof of the house to the east, and rewrite the code to make sure this can never happen again.

If a house is going to be torn down and rebuilt, then there should be a review mechanism with neighbors that is similar to if someone wants to add on to their house.

1 Attachment

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1350zl13fi6o.7bf/1621_James.jpg (1010 KB)

6 Supporters

Eric Saathoff inside Ward 6 May 6, 2015, 3:59 PM

I'm sorry if this is not completely relevant, but I believe the zoning code needs to change to allow carriage houses and ADU's in all of our residential zoning. If we are going to rewrite our zoning code for residential zones, please allow this very commonsense change to go forward! I want to be able to provide a place on my property to care for my aging parents, so my children can live on the same property as their grandparents instead of moving them into an expensive nursing home.

Eric Lein inside Ward 1 May 5, 2015, 9:54 PM

Not all structures in Saint Paul's RT1, RT2, RM1, RM2 & RM3 zoning districts are "Townhouses." Many (probably all) of these districts include single family homes, duplexes, apartment buildings, etc., etc. Despite seemingly clear residential "standards," so-called commercial uses do sneak in now and then (a B&B? a hotel? a reception house?).

EXAMPLE: At RT2-zoned 344 SUMMIT there is a 17,000 square foot historic mansion that, in 2014, was granted a conditional use permit to establish itself as a 10-unit commercial "HOTEL" (aka "reuse of large structure").

Table 66.231 looks like it requires minimum side yard setbacks of nine (9) feet in RT1, RT2, RM1, RM2 & RM3

zones. BUT, the proposed deletion of old Note (h) and inclusion of new Note (i) appears to overrule and eliminate side yard setbacks for all except townhouse structures.

New Note (i) begins by saying, very clearly, "Side yards are required only for dwelling units on the ends of townhouse structures," and then goes to talk about distances between buildings on a single parcel for new construction.

If Table 66.231 and its notes are enacted and enforced as shown in this Attachment 1 - Draft Language, new Note (i) will allow thousands(?) of existing and newly-constructed properties, including the hotel at 344 Summit, to avoid what are currently quite reasonable side yard setback restrictions on parking, additions, new construction, etc., etc.

Assuming that the City of Saint Paul does not intend to eliminate 9-foot side yard setback requirements in RT1, RT2, RM1, RM2 and RM3 zones, PLEASE REVISE AND CLARIFY NEW NOTE (i) ... and think hard about continuing to use old Note (h).

It's all about semantics ... and loopholes.

Thank you -- Eric Lein, 361 Summit Ave, St. Paul, MN 55102

2 Attachments

https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/134wg0di1ywg.46y/344-Summit_STACKED-PARKING_in-easterly-side-yard_2014-11-14_Page_2.jpg (1.38 MB)
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/134whh2ocj6o.3h9/Ward3ResidDesignZoningStudy03-27-15_201503271212425804__COMMENTS-2015-05-05_pp.pdf (1.04 MB)

1 Supporter

Karen Jeffords-Brown inside Ward 3 April 30, 2015, 8:57 AM

I thank Councilmember Tolbert for pursuing concerns about teardowns and the size of new construction in Ward 3. I especially thank Mike Richardson, who has been very accessible to residents, hearing our feedback. He has been thorough and diligent in quantifying our concerns to translate them into zoning changes by meticulously characterizing our current housing stock in Ward Three and the changes that housing stock is undergoing.

I will emphasize it's a myth that for Ward 3, developers and contractors have to offer huge homes to the affluent suburban families that are so often cited as the buyers, or people will not want to buy homes here. I have lived in Macalester Groveland for over 20 years. On my block there has been a lot of turnover of houses and many young families with children have moved in and have not seen the necessity to tear homes down and rebuild huge McMansions. In fact many have moved here because they love the look and feel of the old houses and desire it's retention. This larger-is-better thinking is promoted by builders and investors who want to jam the largest house possible onto the smallest lot possible to make the largest profit possible. Saying that customers are demanding huge homes is like saying the public demanded huge soft drinks and gigantic gas guzzling cars. We did not. But that's what we were given and it was not good for us. As long as the economic incentives allow huge homes on small lots to be easy and profitable, that's what we will get.

We can do better than that. Creativity is fueled by having limits. Many families buy homes here, make modest remodels and blend in well with the community. St. Paul can be innovative and creative, adopting codes that allow new construction and remodels that are welcomed by the neighbors who feel respected in their desire to enjoy their properties.

I don't believe anyone in Ward 3 wants to impose standards on any other ward. Our location is desirable and unique, being close to the river, equidistant from the downtowns, near the airport, etc. If other wards have particular challenges that make these proposed guidelines inadvisable, I believe St. Paul can have a nuanced set of zoning codes. The city needs to provide enough staffing to uphold reasonable guidelines. It would be discouraging if proposed creative guidelines are dismissed because it would stress the current staffing level of city departments. If crime took a huge jump in a ward, the city would increase policing of that ward. If a particular pollution problem arose in a ward, the city would put extra staff time into solving that problem.

I support the proposed changes in zoning that have been proposed for Ward 3. I believe that other wards need time to contemplate these changes but that Ward 3 should be allowed to implement them quickly, and it could be looked at as a pilot, say for 3-5 years, then an evaluation of whether the guidelines inhibited investment in Ward 3 or created other problems. The idea of reducing actual mass and perceived mass of houses that can be built so close to property lines on small lots is needed in Ward 3.
When I bought my now 100 year old home 21 years ago, I visited the home several different times to see how the sunlight came into the home. I am an artist and need natural light in my studio upstairs. I also run a psychotherapy business from my home and my clients never cease to comment how they feel so at home, how they love the windows and the light, and the neighborhood. All that would be drastically changed if huge homes were built next to me blocking my natural light and modest city views. These concerns would be addressed to some degree by limiting the size of newer homes. I wish the guidelines would go further in terms of height limits, larger side yard setbacks and also wishing there was a way to preserve the pattern of detached garages on the alley that allows no construction to block back yard light and views. New homes that run almost the entire length of the lot with an attached garage break up the neighborhood pattern of having an open back yard and contribute to the closed in feeling. Thank you for your time.

3 Supporters

Geneviève Marault inside Ward 1 April 24, 2015, 1:55 PM

We are lucky in St. Paul, to have such a plethora (a treasure!) of wonderful, classic American residential architecture from all economic strata going back more than 160 years. That's rare in most of the US.

And what a joy to walk, bike, or drive down our streets, enjoying the look and feel of those various homes and blocks. Who doesn't love that? And then you come upon a house that someone's remodeled into a lot-crowding, 3-story monster. Although it may look fine elsewhere, it's aesthetically shocking where it is. That kind of "improvement" is unnecessary and throws off the balance of the whole block. Worse than that is when you know a lovely little house once stood there but was demolished to construct something much bigger, incongruous, and less sustainable. I can understand the need for more room and the desire to stay at the same address, but when you're part of a whole you have to consider how your changes will affect the whole. (If you want something bigger, maybe it's time to move to a bigger house that's in an area of bigger houses.) We're all

in this together, and we're in it for the long haul. If folks aren't willing to have that consideration on their own, then we need zoning requirements.

Designated or not, I think all of our homes are historic---families and neighbors have most of their personal history there, sometimes for generations in the same home or area. There are emotional as well as environmental and aesthetic reasons for maintaining our neighborhoods in the sizes and styles they were built. And who's to say that 10, 20, 50 years from now some of those old homes won't be lauded as the childhood homes of famous doctors, inventors, jurists, artists, athletes, and others?

Monica Iammatteo inside Ward 2 April 14, 2015, 3:51 PM

Hi! I have lived in different parts of St. Paul for over 20 years. The reason I love St. Paul is because of all the older homes with great charm. It breaks my heart to see the tearing down and rebuilding bigger. This has been prevalent in the Mac-Groveland area lately. This takes away the history we have here. There is a big difference between "remodeling" & "remuddling". There needs to be consistency in the architecture to unify the neighborhoods. I am all for setting a limitation on sizes of newer builds and also making them blend in with other homes in the vicinity. Thank you!

1 Supporter

Sara Geneva Noreau Kerr inside Ward 3 April 13, 2015, 10:22 PM

I have no interest in living in the shade of a giant house 3 feet from my property line.

But I think dictating character is unfair. This is not a historic district. These homes -- mine included -- were built to serve a purpose: providing shelter for families. They were designed and built with the knowledge and abilities of their era.

I agree that height, setback, and the percentage of land occupied by a home (floor area ratio) should be managed. At the very least, the FAR could be minimally increased but not within 10 feet of property lines, nor more than 25% taller. In other words, I don't mind houses of similar size regardless of their design.

2 Supporters

Pat Lindgren inside Ward 1 April 9, 2015, 4:48 PM

How can I tell you what I think of the design standards when I have followed every link and have not found any actual design standards anywhere? Please post up the actual proposed design standards.

May 8, 2015

TO: St. Paul Planning Commission

FR: Bonnie Alton

RE: Residential Design Standards Zoning Study – Committee Recommendations

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you as a resident of a city that has been a welcoming and stable place to live and raise our families for generations. Thank you also, for your willingness to participate in this process as volunteer activists.

I welcome the very specific comments made by the Neighborhood Committee and the Comprehensive Planning Committee as they consider how the Residential Design Standards Zoning Study might move forward. Specifically I appreciate the two separate committees realizing the importance of testing and outreach to fully vet these recommendations and their suitability beyond Ward 3.

In that spirit, I would like to address the issue of residential building heights ~~appearing to be~~ based upon the Ward 3 Study.

The study suggests that no house should be over 24 feet tall, unless 50% of the structures around it are taller than that. On the face value of that idea, it seems like it might work. The down side of it is that if a conforming structure is 24 feet tall under the new rules, how many thousands of homes in the city become in effect "non-conforming." Further, I would remind you that the houses that fall into that category in District 16 have undergone millions of dollars of renovation over the past 30 years to stabilize their suitability and character for years to come. Finally, when I asked this question to Mike Richardson at our meeting on April 28, he made it pretty clear that it would be the responsibility of the land owner to have surveys done of every single property around them in order to make this determination. That seems overly restrictive.

In that vein, I will point out that I live in a house that is totally non-conforming to the neighborhood in District 16. It is an "in-fill" house that was built next to two grand Victorian homes by a very sweet brother who was concerned about his

maiden sister living alone. Since our purchase, 18 years ago, we have put our hundreds of thousands of dollars into improvements – and are still hoping for a new garage this summer.

Now I am going to put on my hat as a businesswoman, recognizing that the City of St. Paul is a very large business, relying on tax dollars from property taxes and sales taxes to operate. My question is pretty simple in this arena: how do you balance the value of higher taxable real estate and the rights as citizens to own our property without onerous restrictions?

Ultimately, I think the zoning code we have in place works, but if you want to move in this direction, each Ward should be given the opportunity that was afforded Ward 3 and have 12 months to mull it over.

Thank you.

May 11th 2015

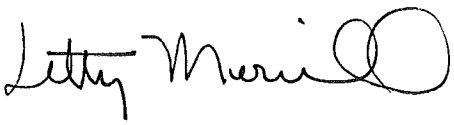
Dear Mike Richardson,

The city needs to treat demolitions, teardowns, and lot splits with at least the same thoughtfulness and scrutiny as variances. There will be times demolition is the right answer, other times it just means the loss of something beautiful or the loss of something sound but small. While walking through the sunny, delightful interior of 1721 Princeton last week, the talk was of how sad and wasteful it would have been had this gem of a structure ended up in a landfill.

The city should have standards that limit the dimension of a new structure or addition to an existing structure. The city should **not** regulate articulation of the exterior walls or door and window placement. The city should not **design** the structure. Architectural diversity enhances the city.

These are my thoughts regarding the Residential Design Standards Zoning Study.

Respectfully,



"Letty"
Mary Gillette Merrill
651-699-0916
101 South Wheeler Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105

Harold Tremblay
1467 Sargent Ave
St Paul 55105
651-491-4392

Been living and paying taxes for 35 years at my home

Demo and new build at 1468 Sargent

House rented for year b/4 work at address. Not Condemmed

1000 sq ft house turned into 2800+ sq ft house

End of June Demo Begins

No notice of teardown happening.

Dirty, loud , cannot open front windows for Summer and Fall

Parking ban in front of my house for at least 6 weeks (July -August)

Owner/Gen Contractor parked illegally during that period. When called on it by my wife, he called the police. Cited a "video" showing her throwing rocks at his property existed. Police never produced alleged video and lectured my wife on how this construction improved the neighborhood. Told her these constructions lasted 2 months tops. (This was in Mid July).Left frustrated when she stood her ground.

Over flowing Dumpsters, sheetrock being tossed out of second floor windows onto the sidewalk below with no concern for passers by.

Workers parking in no parking areas.

Daily delivery of building waste from other job sites t o dumpster.

Deliveries of project materials blocking the street and storing masterial on boulevard.

Most of the work done if front, not in back.

Loud boomboxes during building with workers screaming along all day. When asked to keep it down, ridiculed and harassed my wife.

Sewer main broken in front of my house when Water Works digging to run new line to new house. Our water was off 1/2 day, something we were not prepered for. Received no notice of WW digging and possible shut off.

Natural gas leak emergency on a Saturday night at house. Excel worker said most likely caused a day earlier by the siding contractors.

Dirt Dirt and more dirt.

Constant stream of strangers.

Shadow, ice, Size Compared to Existing homes

Construction around us started 7 years ago, immediately to our east with an addition larger than we were told went up. Got 1 weeks notice on that. Workers trespassed on our property, boarded up our windows to "Protect them" and we endured 6 moths of that build. Grease vent blows at our east side windows so cannot open those. No we have $500 of darkening shades to block out lights coming into our house every night. (night owl)

3 years ago an 1800 sq ft house had 2 story 1200 sq ft addition put on 5 houses down from us. All Summer and Fall had to deal with that noise.

Every direction has building/teardowns going on.

Most are not people building the homes of dreams but speculators who do not live in the area or care about anything but making $.

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Cynthia Hill <chrdh@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 12:16 PM
To: Drummond, Donna (CI-StPaul); Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul); Jerve, Anton (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Comment -- Proposed Residential Design and Dimensional Requirements

I am writing you directly because the comment section on the proposed residential design and dimensional requirements for new construction was closed for new comments -- I had understood it would be open until 4 p.m. today.

In any case, please add my comments to those you have received.

I live next door to 1721 Princeton, which was saved from teardown. Sadly, few neighbors facing this situation on their block are as lucky as we were. Examples of inappropriate new home construction are growing in alarming numbers in Ward 3. While I support the proposed recommendations for Ward 3, they do not go far enough. We citizens of St. Paul deserve to have a voice before any permits for teardowns in our neighborhoods are issued by the City of St. Paul. We need parameters for new construction to maintain the integrity of our neighborhoods -- parameters that would keep developers from building oversized homes that detract and degrade the neighborhood.

I'm afraid to say that there is a common perception that the City of St. Paul is hand-in-glove with developers. Whether that perception is true, I don't know, but the work you are doing in this area provides a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate that the City is equally responsive to its citizens as it is to developers.

Thank you.

Cynthia Hill
161 Amherst Street
Saint Paul, MN 55105
651-698-0235
chrdh@icloud.com

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Nanette <nanettechols@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 3:32 PM
To: Drummond, Donna (CI-StPaul); Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul); Jerve, Anton (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Comment -- Proposed Residential Design and Dimensional Requirements

I am writing you directly because the comment section on the proposed residential design and dimensional requirements for new construction was closed for new comments -- I had understood it would be open until 4 p.m. today.

Please add my comments to those you have received.

I live next door to 1252 James Ave (slated for tear down), across the street from 1253 James Ave, (near tear down "remodel") and up the street from 1229 James Ave, (near tear down "remodel"). Every single one of these homes is an example of outsized, badly constructed behemoth that blocks the light and air to the homes around them and eliminates the access to side yard views and community. None of these home have much of a back yard after the developers are finished. The home next door to me will have about 20' of back yard when the 5 bed room, 4 bath with 3 car garage is finished.

Examples of inappropriate new home construction are growing in alarming numbers in Ward 3. While I support the proposed recommendations for Ward 3, they do not go far enough. The new home next door to me would still be built with only a few minor modifications with the revised lot density. It would still use most of the lot and eliminate the backyard and views from my home.

We citizens of St. Paul deserve to have a voice before any permits for tear downs in our neighborhoods are issued by the City of St. Paul. We need parameters for new construction to maintain the integrity of our neighborhoods -- parameters that would keep developers from building over-sized homes that detract and degrade the neighborhood.

There is a common perception that the City of St. Paul is more sympathetic to needs of developers vs. the needs of it's citizens. The work you are doing in this area provides a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate that the City is equally responsive to its citizens as it is to developers so I'd like to see it continue and go further. A well made home should not be torn down or stripped back to it's bones at the whim of some developer to make a fast buck.

I think the lot density and max height should be based on the immediate neighborhood, not some random percentage spanning the entire city. I have lots of additional ideas to make this workable across neighborhoods rather than trying to fit the entire city. While this is a band aide it does not even scratch the surface to get us to the outcome I and my neighbors are clamoring for. There is not one person on my block that thinks these homes are good for St. Paul.

I hope we can have more conversations and create additional changes to improve the zoning for the City of St. Paul to protect it's assets (our older well built, right sized homes).

Nanette Echols
1256 James Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105

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“The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.” – Albert Einstein

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Linda Winsor <lindajwinsor@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 10:58 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: You have received a YouTube video!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgxWPsCzz0g&sns=em

Mike ,

This is a video to share with the Planning Commission members . It shows one of 2 demolitions that happened in Summit Hill last week.

The historic house at 27 Crocus Place is gone forever . We need design standards to ensure that new construction fits in with the history and character of Summit Hill .

Thank you.
Linda Winsor
708 Goodrich Avenue
Saint Paul

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: elizabeth f <betsy1015@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 08, 2015 11:25 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Planning Commission Written Comment

Mike--

Thanks for sharing your email address with me today at the Planning Commission hearing.

I am a 19 year resident of Jefferson Avenue and was a renter in the neighborhood before owning my home. I do believe the Mac-Groveland and Highland neighborhoods are in crisis as a result of the tear down/extreme remodels.

Several months ago I went to an open house for the tear down/rebuild nearest me on Jefferson. I imagine it would show up on city records as a "remodel" since the builder left a couple of exterior walls--stripped to the studs--standing. I watched the original 1920s stucco bungalow get torn down from this lot and watched the workmanship, materials, and job site management of both during the 9+ months of build out for the new wooden 2 story that replaced it. You can likely picture the house I describe--it has appeared in exactly the same way all over this neighborhood. I went to the open house to educate myself about the new housing stock being built. By the way, this house remains unsold.

I must have had a sour expression on my face and the seller/builder picked up on my discontent. Hoping for a sale somewhere he quickly said to me, "If you don't like this house we have 17 more in this neighborhood you could look at!" At that point my expression must have gone from disgusted to flabbergasted because he quickly said that some were done and some were under construction now.

I left that open house to go to another 2 blocks away. Different builder, same story. The realtor there didn't speak to me directly but I overheard him say to another couple that if they didn't like the house they were in his company had many more in the neighborhood to choose from--he went on to give a long list of addresses nearby for them to check out. Again, this was a different company--you can do the math on the scale of this crisis when multiple companies are flipping that many properties within a small geographic footprint.

There are serious reasons for stricter code: neighborhood access for homebuyers of wider income ranges; property rights of neighbors to quality of life elements as basic as daylight; water runoff management; preservation of architectural character, quality, integrity, creativity, and diversity; loss of property value when over large neighboring houses consume an adjacent lot, etc. I am concerned about all of those issues.

I share my anecdote to speak to the volume behind the concern in our neighborhood. Plenty of folks spoke to the lack of a need for stricter code in their neighborhoods. I believe them. I hope they believe and respect me and my neighbors when we say that in Ward 3 we DO need stricter codes and code enforcement. In fact I would argue that in Ward 3 we need a moratorium. The numbers of houses lost on a daily basis cannot be replaced. I urge the Planning Commission to react to the crisis in Ward 3 by protecting what remains of Ward 3.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Fabel
1880 Jefferson Avenue
651-698-8771

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: S Ludtke <s.ludtke@centurylink.net>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 9:15 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: residential standards zoning code amendments

I attended the hearing on Friday and wish to add written comments.

One of those that did speak mentioned his doubt that many of these rebuilds were complying with the 35% rule. I agree. You look at these at say no way do these comply. But then again if the city counts half of any alley width as part of the calculation, then what else is the city counting. I will mention two properties. The one at 1871 Lincoln has no alley. Another one at 1623 James has an alley on the back and side. Does that one get to count half the width of both alleys? And why should a property with an alley be allowed a larger footprint? What ever happens with these amendments I propose this alley rule be eliminated and it be clear as to how to count property size. Either way, these two under construction are giants compared to existing housing stock and will clearly obstruct neighbors.

I also see garages being built that from what I read don't comply. Supposedly they can't exceed 35% of the back yard. What counts as back yard? I have yet to see in writing that you can include part of the alley width. Take a look at garages at 1459 Juliet and 1459 Palace. Did they get variances for size? The one at 1459 Palace has a heated slab and a second floor. It visually appears to be taller than 15 feet. It's larger than my house and will support the owners construction business.

My point behind that it is great to have zoning rules or guidelines, but if they aren't enforced or variances are easily issued then what is the point. So we go through all this effort in writing new rules, but if they aren't enforced we haven't made progress. If I was a cynic, I might say "follow the money" in order to understand how we got to this point. But I'm trying to keep an open mind.

I support the recommended changes as a start and ask that no delay be incurred in implementing them immediately for Ward 3. I understand why other parts of the city might need further time for input, but I think Ward 3 has spoken.

Regard

Spencer Ludtke
1451 Juliet Avenue

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Rebecca Devine <rebeccadevine@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 2:37 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Residential Design Standards for Ward 3

Dear Mike:

I am writing in support of the proposed Residential Design Standards for Ward 3. While I recognize that the ideal situation would be for the entire City to adopt universal design standards, I fear that is unlikely to happen. And it certainly cannot happen soon. While some districts are desperate for development and gratified by the economic stimulation that comes with such development, others are looking for a "pause" button. Ward 3 falls in the latter category.

Ward 3 needs regulation soon or it will be too late. Statistics support the general feeling among residents of Highland and MacGroveland that the landscape of our part of St. Paul - the architecture, the history, the character - that appeal that you can't quite describe but you know it when you feel it - is changing. And not for the better. Houses are being torn down so rapidly, and rebuilt so quickly, whole blocks are changing right before our very eyes.

At a recent real estate investment conference, the speaker was touting Highland as one of the top three "Foundation Markets" in the Twin Cities metro area. In other words, get it while it's hot, people. Let's teardown down the bungalows and whip up some McMansions as soon as possible. This has to stop. Not only are these new houses unsuitable to the neighborhood in proportion and design (or lack thereof), but they are erected so quickly I fear they will deteriorate just as fast, leaving Ward 3 littered with a less stable, less viable - and possibly vacant - housing stock.

Secondly, Ward 3 needs to enforce the Design Standards. It seems variance requests are being rubber stamped; they are the rule, rather than the exception. On my own block, just this spring, a home has acquired an addition which resembles a two-story apartment building attached to the back by merely a breezeway. And none of us neighbors was notified. Additionally, on the same block, a home was purchased by a developer who applied to split the lot, building a second home on the parcel. In the second instance, the neighbors were notified and thereby united to successfully oppose the application. However, the way City regulations currently read, neighbor notification is not even required for a lot split. It was not until a major variance appellation was filed that the neighboring houses received notification.

While the idea of universal design standards for the City is appealing in theory, it is not practical to put such standards into effect in a timely fashion. And time is of the essence. Let us act now before it is too late for Ward 3; let us not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good.

Sincerely yours,

Rebecca Devine

501 Mount Curve Blvd.

Design Standards Zoning Study
Planning Commission May 8, 2015
Public Hearing
Save Our Saint Paul Neighborhoods (SOSPN) Comments

1) Ward 3 is ready, eager and demanding that this small initial step proceed in that ward.
2) These standards require further consideration as to whether they are well suited for the whole city.
3) This is just the beginning, and not the end of changes that are required to protect our neighborhoods.
4) We suggest that the city develop conservation districts as a tool which can be tailored to suit differing conditions and needs of our varying neighborhoods.

Many St. Paul neighborhoods are experiencing an alarming rate of partial and complete teardowns of residential homes followed by new construction that often is at odds with the unique history, character, and natural resources of St. Paul's neighborhoods.

We appreciate the work that Ward 3 has done to develop design standards for their neighborhoods to address new construction. While we do not support the immediate application of these design standards city-wide, we do support their immediate adoption for Ward 3 whose residents are feeling the greatest impact of demolitions and large re-builds. This could be used as a pilot for 3-5 years to determine their effect on the impact of large rebuilds on adjacent properties and any impacts on the pace of new home construction in Ward 3. However, at this time, we do not support the adoption of Ward 3 Design Standards city-wide for the City of Saint Paul, since those design standards have only been developed and tested for Ward 3 and we see enough areas in the proposed standards that would not serve the needs of various neighborhoods. We do support further study and public input in the development and testing of city-wide design standards in a timely way.

Here are some examples of concern regarding the city-wide adoption of Ward 3 Design Standards.

1. Height reduction at side setback lines for single-family properties, increases allowed with larger setback.
   - This could allow for additional building height that would differ from the facing and adjacent block streetscape scale.
2. Greater height allowed if context supports it – if more than 50% of **residential buildings** within 100 ft. exceed the maximum height allowed, the new maximum is the average height of those buildings.
   - Isn't the character of a block better determined by a wider radius of the facing and adjacent blocks, not a radius of only 100 ft.? As an example, a house that has an adjacent conforming multiple family dwelling on one side and a commercial building across the street would not be evaluated based on a representative sample of the nearby single family homes using 100 feet as the standard—especially since these buildings typically sit on larger lots. The BZA variance notification requirements cite notification of residences within 350 feet of the property in question for major variances, which should include height. Why should the evaluation include a lesser radius than that of a major variance?
3. What about a height minimum standard? For example, some blocks in historic neighborhoods would need a minimum of 2 stories to be consistent with the character of the facing and adjacent blocks.
4. Exceptions for expansion in nonconforming areas generally not visible from the street.

- What about guidelines for expansions that encroach on the quality of neighbors' backyard experiences? The extended side wall of a house can drastically change the light, view, drainage, and privacy of neighbors' backyards.

5. Opening minimums for additions of at least 120 square feet, above grade window and door openings shall comprise at least 10% of the wall area added, or above grade window and door openings shall comprise at least 10 % of the total area of all exterior walls.
   - What about facing and adjacent blocks where the existing homes have large windows and doors that comprise more than 10% of the total area of exterior walls?
6. Change in side setback requirement for RM1-RM3 multiple family zoning districts to 9 ft., consistent with existing traditional building patterns in St. Paul.
   - In District 16, and possibly other districts/wards, a significant portion of multiple family residences consists of structures that were originally built as single family homes and thus have side setbacks that are—and should continue to be—consistent with the prevailing style and type of housing stock in that neighborhood.

In addition, we urge the Planning Commission to make more tools available to provide protections for homes and community resources in St. Paul's unique and diverse neighborhoods, augmenting existing historic and overlay districts that have been implemented to recognize legitimate differences and needs between districts and wards, with a goal of minimizing the need for variances. One example that has been very successful in Minneapolis and around the country is an ordinance for the establishment of conservation districts. What tools do you plan to offer St. Paul neighborhoods?

Furthermore, if additional resources are needed for PED and HPC to properly do their jobs and eliminate errors upfront in assessing historic standing as well as ordinances and statutes affecting requests for demolitions, full or partial teardowns, lot splits, substantial renovations and variances requested (such as were seen in the case of 27 Crocus Place or 1721 Princeton, to name just a couple of examples), as well as better enforcement of site plans, variances and other permits granted, the City should provide them. The rate of errors and variances granted has become unconscionable and should not be borne by residents of the district without any recourse. Funding would be through assessing higher permit fees, taxes on teardowns, and other fees accurately reflecting the cost of providing a professional level of services. This could go as far in protecting the neighborhood as the design standards.

Thank you for your time.

Save Our Saint Paul Neighborhoods is a grassroots movement of residents from across the City of Saint Paul who are advocating for the preservation, protection and enhancement of the unique history, character and natural resources of St. Paul's neighborhoods.

https://www.facebook.com/NeighborsForCommunityFocusedDevelopment

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Tom Dodder <btd1379@usfamily.net>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 11:09 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Response to Proposed Residential Design Standards

This is response to the proposed Residential Design Standards.

We think the sidewall height limit should be as proposed in the original Ward 3 Residential Design Standards that would limit the height of the sidewalls to a maximum of two full stories unless the house is set back more than 12 feet from the property line. In our opinion this would be in keeping with the general height and character of the older houses in Ward 3.

Tom and Betsy Dodder

Mike, thank you for all your work on the Residential Design Standards.

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Linda Winsor <lindajwinsor@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 5:22 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Ward 3 Design Standards---Comments for the PC public hearing on May 8th, 2015

Design Standards Zoning Study

Planning Commission May 8, 2015

My Personal Comments

Dear Mr. Richardson,

Thank you for your work in developing the proposed Ward 3 Design Standards. I know that Ward 3 is experiencing teardowns, partial teardowns, lot splits, and new mcmansion construction at very alarming rates and the design standards are a step in the right direction towards working to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods in Mac Groveland and HIghland Park.

I live in Ward 2 and am very concerned about the necessity of taking steps to preserve and enhance all of our Saint Paul neighborhoods. My Summit Hill neighborhood is also experiencing some of the same issues that Ward 3 has addressed. For example, within the last 2 years, there have been 3 teardowns within 2 blocks of my home---the most recent being 27 Crocus Place 3 days ago. In addition, there was 1 lot split and construction of a new home in the last year and across the street from that new house is another expected teardown, lot split, and 2 new houses to fill each lot. Finally, there is a house on the market that lists a teardown and new house on the MLS listing. Although my neighborhood is experiencing some of the same issues as Ward 3 regarding teardowns, lit splits, and new construction, the Ward 3 Design Standards do not thoroughly address some of the issues in my neighborhood. For example, the Ward 3 Design Standards address height maximums, but what about a height minimum standard? Many blocks in my neighborhood would need a minimum of 2 stories to be consistent with the character of the facing and adjacent blocks.

While Ward 3 is overdue for implementation of design standards to begin to address their neighborhoods' issues, the proposed Ward 3 Design Standards have not been developed with other Saint Paul neighobrhoods' in mind, nor have they been tested beyond Ward 3. Therefore, I would highly recommend that the Planning Commission not adopt the Ward 3 Design Standards for city-wide application at this time and allow Ward 2 and other Wards to study, develop, and test design standards that would address their neighborhoods' issues.

Thank you for your consideration,

Linda Winsor

708 Goodrich Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55105

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: kristajevans <kristajevans@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 8:21 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul); Kantner, Libby (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Planning commission zoning changes public hearing

Mike & Libby,

I was at the last meeting for Save our St Paul Neighborhoods with Amy Spong. I voiced a concern at the end of her talk, that historic districts are not likely to
help me (or my neighbors), in my non-Tangletown part of Ward 3. What tools did she have to help folks like me and my next-door teardown example? The answer I heard was: not much. In fact, I heard her presentation with frustration that we don't have the city surveys done ANYWHERE that are up to date in the past 20 years, so there will be few decisions (if any) made to help save areas with historic preservation measures or cconservation districts in the city without these surveys. Surveys can be done by non-city officials, if hired. I imagine communities with resources like Capitol Hill/Crocus Pl or Tangletown neighborhood may pull this off, if united in their wishes and financial backing.

I also do not believe Mike Richardson's study is enough nor is it going to stop tear-downs like the one next door to me or others in Ward 3. That said, I do believe Mike's study and recommendations are a small step in the right direction. I do hope that it is implemented in Ward 3 as soon as possible, and the rest of the city only if their wards are interested. I am not interested in delaying or diluting the
recommendations in this study for the reason of city-wide application. I do hope Chris Tolbert and other city council members continue to work on
REAL AND ENFORCEABLE solutions for the tear-down trend and don't stop with this study and zoning changes as a means to placate their constituents.

I will miss the May 8 meeting due to a family member's wedding, but am sending my written comments to Mike Richardson for inclusion in the public comments.

Kind Regards,
Krista Evans
1953 Jefferson Ave

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: ROGER OLSON <murielsolson@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2015 5:19 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: new housing code proposal.

I looked over the proposal and it appears to be a big improvement.

Muriel S.Olson
1911 Palace Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105
murielsolson@yahoo.com

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Hoppe, Bruce <Bruce.Hoppe@PENTAIR.COM>
Sent: Monday, April 06, 2015 2:06 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul)
Subject: FW: Planning Commission Notice of a Public Hearing- New residential construction standards - relates to 555 Mount Curve
Attachments: Res+Stds+ENS+Notice+PC_With+RationaleRev01.pdf

Mike,
This notice indicted that you could be contacted with comments. For those of us living on Mount Curve Blvd in St. Paul, these new zoning code requirements come too late for our neighborhood, but they are a needed and welcomed response to a growing number of self-interested builders and home owners who are building massive unbefitting structures. In the case of 555 Mount Curve, the owner here came onto a very large inheritance and carelessly built a 3-story, flat-roof, contemporary looking skyscraper off the back of his 1950's colonial – more than doubling his previous modest structure. He consumed his entire back yard, blocking all line of sight from both sides. And of course the architect and builder in this case did not offer any voice of reason or appropriateness, nor did the owner convey his intentions to his neighbors. It is too bad that the City needs these common sense, proportional zoning laws to keep self-interested, self-consumed owners and builders from doing things that are not in the best interest of the overall neighborhood or City.

Thanks to the City for getting after these issues.

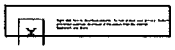
Bruce Hoppe
Director of Business Development

Pentair Technical Solutions
Minneapolis, MN 55303 USA
Office: 1.763.422.2494
Mobile: 1.612.670.9051
Bruce.hoppe@pentair.com
www.pentair.com

From: City of Saint Paul [mailto:cityofsaintpaul@public.govdelivery.com]
Sent: Monday, April 06, 2015 8:19 AM
To: Hoppe, Bruce
Subject: Planning Commission Notice of a Public Hearing

The attached is a notice that the Saint Paul Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Residential Standards Zoning Code Amendments, Friday, May 8, 2015. Thank you.

- Res Stds ENS Notice PC_With RationaleRev01.pdf



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May 8, 2015

This issue affects far more than Ward 3. Saint Paul needs to re-evaluate its current approach toward demolition of current housing stock. There are two trends - tearing down homes in affluent neighborhoods to build newer, bigger houses, and tearing down homes in poorer neighborhoods to expand commercial or university structures. In both cases the integrity of St. Paul's historic character is significantly compromised. It is especially concerning when the demolitions are orchestrated by people who do not live in St. Paul, or by developers from other areas who are only interested in cannibalizing St. Paul's housing stock for profit. Please put stronger demolition ordinances into place and, if demolition is absolutely necessary, control what gets built instead. Please help protect what makes St. Paul special - historic homes, historic neighborhoods with loved, well-tended houses - not McMansions, not urban sprawl, not development for the sake of development.

Robin Hemingway
1267 Thomas Ave

1 Attachment
https://pd-oth.s3.amazonaws.com/production/uploads/attachments/1355rtgf9zyo.4r5/victorian.jpg

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Mary Kay Devine <marykaydevine@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 11, 2015 11:25 PM
To: .; Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

Understood as "end of day."
MR gave unclear deadline.

Dear Mr. Richardson,
I would like to respond to the need for a change in Residential Zoning Standards as I was unable to attend the May 8th meeting. Obviously the zoning staudards of the past do not work so well now as people have the financial means to buy and tear down homes and then replace them with much larger homes or double the existing size of smaller homes. That in itself is fine if it does not infringe on the rights of their nieghbors, who often lose sunlight and devaluation of their property .It seems to me that the small lots (40 by 120) need to have some restrictions in place regarding size of new home or additions, height limitations, proximity to neighboring homes and minimum amount of yard space remaining. . If there is little yard space remaining, who but the nieghbors handles their storm water run off.

I was and continue to be so sad for the neighbor of the new structure at 1623 James Avenue. They now live next to a high wall with little or no sunlight. Such a builder should not be allowed further permission to build in our Macalester-Groveland and Highland neighborhoods. Another example of construction that devalued a lovely neighborhood in Highland Park is located on Scheffer Avenue two houses off of Cretin Avenue to the west. I was unable to locate thei address on the home. I am not sure how such construction design can be restricted but the house has no resemblance to the rest of the neighborhood, is considerably higher than any other home in the vicinity and has very little yard space left.

I realize that many factors have to be considered as residential zoning standards are being changed. Hopefully we can keep our lovely neighborhoods and still provide adequate housing for our people.

R

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Devine

May 11, 2015

A zoning meeting scheduled for a Friday at 0830 limits who can attend, most of us work. I feel this is one way the city can push through what they want or what benefits them without the majority input from the community. I live at 408 So Warwick and the property teardown at 416 Warwick is my immediate concern but obviously they are all over this area. This construction has 3 FULL stories, not the 1 1/2 stories that makes up this community. Even 2 stories would be tolerable but not 3. The house this high has changed the light, the growing capability for our gardens, privacy and aesthetics. It does NOT fit the neighborhood and is changing Mac-Groveland forever. The price of this home is $649,900, what will that do to the value of my home and tax base??? There are plenty of big homes on Summit and the River Road, Crocus Hill etc where they can do a tear down and build a house this size and it won't look out of place or negatively impact the neighbors. The property at 416 Warwick has a construction company that has a history of mortgage fraud. They informed the neighbors of their plans AFTER the house was half built and Chris Tolbert (rep) says the company is sorry and they still are working out the bugs to inform neighbors. The construction site has been horrible, overflowing dumpsters, construction material flying into our trees and yards, cigarette butts up and down the sidewalk and on our lawns, no public sidewalk just broken cement and mud, fowl mouthed workers with no regard to people in their yards or on their decks. It took multiple calls to the city complaint line before erosion rolls were placed and the dumpster emptied. They have broken the fence at 412 Warwick and snapped branches off their maple tree. They have destroyed a tree in the back of 416 by just cutting a huge limb to make way for their tractors and the dead brush has been there for months. I just found out about this forum and that my statement had to be in by 430p today so I apologize for not reading all the zoning info as yet but...the garage has not been started yet so I am asking/begging that is be built to the height of the immediate existing homes garages, not the full 2 story the teardowns are going with. This would only further negatively impact our light, privacy, view and aesthetics for the neighborhood. Now is the time to stop a MAMMOTH garage at 416 Warwick!!! I have been a resident at 408 for 35 yrs and this is the most ridiculous activity St. Paul and ReMax realty has partnered in doing. Please, stop the madness!!!

Barb Young
408 So Warwick

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: jackfei@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 10:38 AM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Feedback on Zoning Study

Mike,

A city-wide Zoning Code Modification can't resolve many Ward 3 resident concerns about 'abusive for profit teardowns and replacement with mc mansions'. Some additional initiatives are needed for a broader solution:

1. A city-wide zoning code can not incorporate architectural styles, building forms, and other design elements critical to character in one neighborhood but not another. The city needs to pass an ordinance enabling neighborhoods to setup 'conservation districts' where neighbors may want one. For example, a 'Tangletown Conservation District' standard would apply to new Tangletown construction but not other neighborhoods. In this scenario, the City Zoning Code & the Tangletown Standard together determine future development.

2. Any City-wide zoning code with conservation district is meaningless if deviations from a development site plan are not checked or, if found, are not enforced. The city must strengthen the existing site plan compliance enforcement by better tools and increased staff resource. Also the creation of partnerships with a "Citizen Construction Watchgroup", any site plan deviation could be caught, reported and corrected early. This will reduce rework, and mitigate neighborhood impact.

3. Currently, the city doesn't provide neighbor notification about a teardown until demotion permits are issued. It is not uncommon for a house in a Ward 3 neighborhood to be demolished and Mc Mansion built without neighbor notification and engagement! Surely, a change that can forever alter neighborhood character warrents *some* neighbor notification and engagement before the action occurs.

4. Currently, economic incentives encourage outside owners and builders to tear down small homes to build large homes for the 1% wealthy suburban residents. These incentives work against house preservation and the 99% Ward 3 middle class homeowners. The city can alter these economic incentives by enacting a 'teardown tax' ordinance. The tax would be based on the value of the house (not lot) with a rate that increases with the value of the structure being torn down. The idea is 'make it less profitable to tear down a more valuable structure' (making renovation more financially attractive without subsidy).

Coupled with a provision with 'teardown tax forgiveness' contingent upon neighbor approval, a 'teardown tax ordinance' creates incentive for owner/developer and neighborhood cooperatioon. The result is less City Council Member time spent working on neighbor housing issues and more time spent on city-wide initiatives.

Jack Fei
1359 Sargent Ave
St Paul, Mn 55105

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Lori Brostrom <lbrostrom@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, May 06, 2015 4:33 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Lori Brostrom
Subject: Comments on Proposed Design Guidelines for 5.8.15 Public Hearing

Hi Mike,

First, thank you for taking the time to go over the proposed design guidelines last Thursday for the Summit Hill Association and other interesting parties. It was very helpful.

I wanted to share my thoughts--and some questions--in response to the proposed guidelines. At this time, I think it is too soon to adopt the proposed guidelines on a city-wide basis. While they may be ideal for Ward 3, after many months of discussion, public input and some very thorough data collection and analysis based on Ward 3's situation and needs, I see many areas where they would not meet the needs of District 16/Ward 2, and I'm assuming there will be similar issues with other districts and wards. I would like for our district and others to go through the same process as Ward 3, but do endorse having these changes implemented in Ward 3, given the many challenges that they have faced and continue to face with teardowns, replacement buildings and major additions.

I used the framework of the seven major recommendations laid out in a handout given by Donna Drummond to the SHA board in early April, which was augmented by a marked-up copy of some of the existing regulation language and proposed changes, and a table recapping the guidelines, as the basis of my comments, which are below:

Overview of Planning Commission Residential Design Standards City-Wide Major Recommendations:

1. Require additions of 120 sq. ft. or greater to adhere to 10% window and door openings minimum.

a. Comment: This is probably appropriate as a guideline city-wide.

2. Height reduction at side setback lines for single family properties, increases allowed for with larger setback.

a. Comment: Contrary to a statement by Mike Richardson that the number of stories in the guidelines will limit greater heights resulting from a guideline such as this, I don't agree. Height maximums should be absolute and if people opt for greater side setbacks for new construction for functional, aesthetic or construction cost reasons, so be it. In District 16 due to the taller historic houses in many areas, and the greater width of many of the lots, we could potentially end up with much taller houses; on smaller lots, we could end up with "towers" that are out of place with the neighborhood character.

b. Question: Additionally, regarding height restrictions vs. # of stories allowed, which will trump the other if there is a dispute?

3. Change in side setback requirement for RM1-RM3 multiple family zoning districts to 9 ft., consistent with existing traditional building patterns in St. Paul.

a. Comment: In District 16, a significant portion of multiple family residences consists of structures that were originally built as single family homes and thus have side setbacks that are—and should continue to be—consistent with the prevailing style and type of housing stock in that neighborhood.

4. Greater height allowed if context supports it—if more than 50% of residential buildings within 100 ft. exceed the maximum height allowed, the new maximum is the average height of those buildings.

a. Comment: Why only 100 feet? Current BZA rules require sending neighbor within 350 feet of the property in question notice of major variance requests and 100 feet for minor variance requests (defined as single family additions, garages, fences and pools). The height of a residential building has a much more permanent, further-reaching impact on the neighborhood and neighboring properties than that of the listed minor variances. Furthermore, for larger lots, of which District 16 has several, the 100 ft. limit could barely extend to 2 properties on either side and one property front and back. If the immediate surrounding properties are commercial or multi-family, what happens then?

5. Total maximum lot coverage—50% for all buildings, including principle and accessory structures (such as garages).

a. Comment: There are many houses in District 16 which are on a parcel which is 1.5 to 2 lots wide. What would prevent someone from tearing down the existing house and putting 2 primary residences on the expanded lot with a smaller garage to meet the lot coverage requirements?

b. Question: What is the rationale for including half the alley as part of the overall lot size? If it can't be built upon (which it can't), it shouldn't be included.

c. Question: How are structures that look permanent but are, in fact, temporary, counted. For example—children's playhouses, prefab storage sheds (such as one might buy at Menards and assemble), gazebos.

6. Sidewall articulation—required for building faces longer than 35 ft. in length, at least 1 ft. in depth and 6 ft. in length.

a. Comment: This is probably appropriate as a guideline city-wide.

7. Exceptions for expansions in nonconforming areas generally not visible from the street.

a. This is a huge mistake. The impacts of extensions, teardowns and their replacements, etc. which are not visible from the street can be enormously negative. Example: 555 Mt. Curve, which extends into the back yard so far that it completely blocks the back yard visibility of the surrounding neighbors, not to mention casting shadows and, likely, effects drainage for that lot and surrounding lots.

Additional observations for District 16/Ward 2:

- The character mapping that was done for Ward 3 would be very helpful. If a historic survey, as is being discussed, for District 16 is done, would that facilitate the character mapping? Evaluating the impact of some of the proposed changes on District 16/Ward 2 is impossible without having data on the status quo.

- If additional resources are needed for PED and HPC to properly do their jobs and eliminate errors upfront in assessing historic standing as well as ordinances and statutes affecting requests for demolitions, full or partial teardowns, lot splits, substantial renovations and variances requested (such as were seen in the case of 27 Crocus Place), as well as better enforcement of site plans, variances and other permits granted, the City should

provide them. The rate of errors and variances granted has become unconscionable and should not be borne by residents of the district without any recourse. Funding would be through assessing higher permit fees, taxes on teardowns, and other fees accurately reflecting the cost of providing a professional level of services. This could go as far in protecting the neighborhood as the design standards.

- Creating style guidelines for a neighborhood such as District 16 which is substantially part of a historic district should happen concurrently to the design guidelines. They already exist for many of the historic districts throughout the city and should not be that difficult to implement given the unique nature of District 16.

- How does basement elevation (seen in many of the larger and older houses in District 16) interplay with or impact height and # of stories guidelines? For a house whose basement projects 6 to 8 feet above the grade at the front of the house, is that included as a story or additive to the overall height vs. the guidelines?

- What are the height restrictions for accessory structures such as carriage houses, which are common in District 16? What about the so-called "mother-in-law" apartments that, for a period of time, developers and owners were trying to use to get around occupancy requirements?

- The height requirements seem to be without context regarding the grade of the property. Over and above the earlier question/concern regarding basement elevation, there are blocks within District 16 and other districts that vary in terms of the front door grade/elevation vs. the sidewalk and street. Within a given block there can be houses with significant front yard berms requiring several steps up to the front door next to houses with no steps or elevation required. Without height allowances for that context, the maximum heights can be meaningless and allow undesirable variation across multiple properties, contrary to the apparent intent of the height guidelines.

- 66.231h is very confusing as written. Without having the kind of character mapping date that was made available for Ward 3, the impact of this in District 16/Ward 2 would be impossible to judge and thus, raise concerns about accepting this as a guideline.

Thank you for considering these comments and questions.

Lori Brostrom
710 Summit Avenue Apt. 1
St. Paul, MN 55105
651.222.5816

Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Bob Buck <bob@buck-bros.com>
Sent: Friday, May 01, 2015 12:47 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Ward 3 Residential Design Standards report feedback

Hi Mike-

I won't be in town for the May 8th meeting regarding the design standards. I trust that feedback I provide to you will find the proper routing.

I appreciate the effort you and others have put into the report and the extensive research, both locally and nationally, that has been done to come up with the recommendations.

My general reactions are:

I feel strongly about the need to maintain high quality and sustainability standards for new, and large addition, construction. The exterior shell (roofing, windows, doors, siding, trim) need to be of long lasting materials and constructed in a manner that will support this longer building life.
For new home construction the formula for the developers is to build as large a dwelling as possible for the site. While this will maximize profits, in the long term the community will suffer from housing stock with a short "shelf life" (i.e., building components needing replacement before the new homeowner has had time to realize the equity in their property).
Having neighborhoods populated with homeowners replacing windows or siding 15 years after purchasing a $600,000 home is no way to create a livable community.
There are a number of avenues for reaching these standards:
1. Restrict the types of materials that can be incorporated in the construction - i.e., siding to be of a solid, quality material; windows with high performance standards for energy efficiency and weather resistance.
2. Provide incentives when higher quality materials or products are incorporated.
3. Provide sizing standards for total residence square footage that promotes smaller housing. Developers can get a return on their investment not from increasing the square footage, but they can by investing more in quality construction.

I'm nervous about the movement to establish detailed design standards. While I support amending the setbacks and total lot coverage, as well as VERY general standards for "what makes a house", I think that a detailed list of requirements or a point system (such as Mpls) stifles innovative and high quality design. The dilemma is that you either have a rigid system without provisions for variance, or you have the city hire high quality (and politic) design reviewers.

Again, thanks for your work on these issues. I look forward (I hope) to the next stage.

Regards,
Bob Buck

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Minneapolis, MN 55406
612.729.7608
bob@buck-bros.com
www.buck-bros.com
National Association of the Remodeling Industry, MN Chapter - Member

Mike Richardson
City Planner
Planning and Economic Development
25 W 4th St, Suite 1300
Saint Paul, MN 55102

May 06, 2015

Dear Mike,
I would like to offer my review comments of the proposed Residential Design Standards for Ward 3. Let me begin by commending you for the thoughtful work that has already taken place and for the openness and inclusion you have shown throughout the process. I had hoped to participate in the public forums and reviews when they occurred, however, they were scheduled at times when I was either out of town or had other commitments that could not be changed.

In general, I understand the motivation and intent behind the proposed standards. I believe that much of the built work leading to and causing concern is ill conceived, poorly planned, over-scaled and designed and built with little art or craft and with disregard for its impact on the neighborhood or block. Much of it is, in my opinion, inappropriate and distasteful – utterly lacking in sensibility. I recognize that my opinions are rather subjective.

I am a proponent of environmentally responsible design. I am in favor of greater density. I prefer homes that are appropriately sized for the site, building less and reusing and remodeling existing homes rather than tear downs wherever possible and within economic and environmental constraints. I also believe our neighborhoods should be allowed to evolve and grow with a diversity of character, style and form.

I am opposed to the residential design standards as I believe they will not be uniformly applied or ensure that any of the built work will increase in quality or improve the neighborhood character they hope to protect. In fact, I believe they will do more harm than good. I believe that a path requiring "compatibility" and conformity can only be subjective and ultimately leaves everybody frustrated, unsatisfied, and forces the use of a lowest-common-denominator yardstick by which we measure anything. The proposed standards, while well intentioned, invariably lead to a sense that only homes with gable roofs, clapboard siding, stucco or brick (no matter how poorly used) are acceptable. We can already see that requiring stylistic conformity does nothing to deter poor design. Nearly all of the tear-downs are replaced with structures that have elements common to the existing neighborhood (gable roofs, etc.) and yet are nothing more than hulking brutes on the block. I fear that the standards will create significant roadblocks to and discourage any thoughtful designer that strays from that generic straight and narrow. The harder we squeeze, the more that seems to escape from our grasp and all we are left with is a lukewarm, beige mediocrity. I am weary of this. We have enough of it already.

I believe that neighborhoods need to evolve, grow and have a variety of styles or "character" of buildings. Diversity of style and character is important. I again wish we could address quality of design rather than a mutable character which can change from block to block. If the existing character is poor to begin with, why should we be forced to carry it forward?

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kflynn@ecodeep.com
EcoDEEP

Homeowners must be allowed to expand, grow and invested in their homes and neighborhoods or the neighborhoods atrophy, wither and die. Nothing will appraise. I've seen far too many potential (6 in the last year) projects come to a halt in established St Paul neighborhoods because a homeowner can't quite accomplish what they hope to and have the project appraise and make financial sense given the constraints the economic values of the surrounding homes. What happens? They sell and move elsewhere. Each of those projects would have been remodels – not teardowns – would have been well within the existing zoning and design standards and been excellent additions to the contextual character of the block and neighborhood. It is quite discouraging. I don't think any of the projects could have conformed to all components of the new, proposed standards.

My fear is that the new standards will be so restrictive that people won't be able to do much of anything at all other than a modest kitchen addition or small family room. The ability to add an additional bedroom and bath on the second floor with deck and family room and new entry at the ground floor may be made extremely difficult. And so, people will be left with homes that no longer work for them or for future potential buyers. They'll move to Woodbury or Edina and in the end, we'll be left with a great many starter homes that were built with the intention of being added onto, but now can't be in any significant way. In the end, very few people will want those homes, the neighborhoods won't see continued investment (in housing or community) and they will end up decaying and becoming less valued.

The suggestion of implementing a design advisory program such as is available in Richfield or St Louis Park begins to address issues of quality, but we must understand that a two hour chit chat with an architect will never ensure that the owner implement better design solutions and cannot guarantee homeowners will take advantage of the program. I am tempted to suggest that rather than imposing more stringent design requirements that the City instead require that all projects simply be designed by an architect. I do realize that architects can also contribute to the mundane but - I think there would be a much higher level of quality overall.

I stand behind the comments I provided to the previous draft (March, 2015) of the proposed standards. I have not included salient points relating to sustainability, energy or environmental performance. As you note, these issues are important but are rather outside the scope of the standards – they in fact deserve their own discussion. I find the most onerous part of the proposed standards to be the proposed height reductions for overall height and that at the sidewalls. I feel that the proposed heights are too low and effectively eliminate the potential to use a flat roof, potentially gable roofs fronting a side lot or larger dormers. The proposal to limit total lot coverage to 50% (which I generally agree with) requires that people build upward rather than outward – except the height restrictions may now render that possibility unachievable. It's a pickle.

Sincerely,

Kevin Flynn, AIA, LEED FELLOW
EcoDEEP Architects and Green Building Consultants

cc. Chris Tolbert, Ward 3 Councilmember

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Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)

From: Tom Goldstein <tom_goldstein@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2015 3:42 PM
To: Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul)
Cc: 'Julie Reiter'; anne@unionparkdc.org
Subject: Out of character homes in St. Paul
Attachments: DSC02702.JPG; DSC02722.JPG

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Mike:

You asked for comments about the proposed zoning changes that you presented to the Union Park District Council Land Use Committee on Monday night.

Pasted below is what I posted on Facebook last week, along with an earlier email response from Wendy Lane that was forwarded to the original complainant. This is precisely the kind of character-harming building that I don't think should be allowed in a neighborhood—at least not the one where this prefab was placed. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words, so I'm adding some images of the place that shows the contrast with the surrounding properties.

I trust that my email will be added to the public comments regarding the proposed zoning changes, particularly since we don't know exactly what the new language means and whether a prefab home like this, which Wendy Lane says is permissible under the current code, would still be possible with the changes. Thanks.

Best,

Tom Goldstein

P.S. The contactor cut down a small boulevard tree so that they could unload the prefab house onto the lot. Is that permissible under the current code?

FB Post @ Historic Hamline Village

Think that the Hamline Midway neighborhood isn't being affected by teardowns of middle class homes with ugly substitutes in their place? Think again. Here are photos taken today of the mega-duplex built on a narrow but long lot at 742 Pascal Ave N. Notice how the prefab building towers over its neighbors, blocks out the sky, turns a backyard into a concrete pad, removes a tree from the boulevard, and has shoddy workmanship to boot (check out the dents in the vinyl siding along the roof line)?

Who owns 742 Pascal Ave N? An outfit called AAA North Properties LLC, located in New Brighton—yet another outside developer invading our community with a misfit building that is geared toward student housing at the expense of the neighborhood.

Here's an interesting reply from the city when a neighbor complained about the "ugly" building:

From: Lane, Wendy (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2014 3:59 PM
To: Bauer, Kelly (CI-StPaul); #CI-StPaul_Ward4
Subject: RE: Ugly House

Kelly,

Yes, the structure is allowed. The address is 742 N. Pascal St. It is an up- and-down duplex with four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a study in each unit. Perhaps it is intended for student rental because it is so close to Hamline U.

The elevation plans are attached. The plans were found to be in compliance with all zoning regulations including the design standards in Sec. 63.110. Consequently, the permit for the building was approved. There is no standard regulating the attractiveness of the building.

Wendy Lane
Zoning Administrator
Department of Safety and Inspections
375 Jackson St., Suite 220
Saint Paul, MN 55101
P: 651-266-9081
wendy.lane@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Making Saint Paul the Most Livable City in America

From: Bauer, Kelly (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Friday, October 31, 2014 3:08 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4; Lane, Wendy (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Ugly House

Wendy,

Can you give us any insight to this issue below? Thank you in advance. Kelly

"Someone called wondering about the zoning laws that allow for putting up ugly houses. There is a modular home by HU on Pascal between Englewood & Minnehaha that is ugly, ruining everyone's property value, and really changing the look of the neighborhood. It's a "Huge Monstrosity".

The Developer bought the lot on City Auction about a year ago. Is this structure allowed?"

****

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