

City of Saint Paul Planning Commission Resolution

File Number _____

Date _____

WHEREAS, Rehder and Associates on behalf of Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS), File #18-117-556, has applied for site plan approval for a 3-story, 23,500 square foot building addition to an existing school, play area and stormwater management, as well as removal of a portion of the existing building and entire east surface parking lot under the provisions of §61.402(c) of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, on property located at property address 1031 Como Ave, legally described as Warrendale Subj To Esmt, Vac Alley Accruing And Fol, Beg At The Nw Cor Of Lot 19 Thence Sely On The Nely Lot Line 60 Ft Thence S 78 Ft To Pt 48.5 Ft E At Ra From W Line Of Sd Lot Thence Swly 41.4 Ft To Pt On S Line 25 Ft E At Ra From W Line Thence Wly On Sd Line 28 Ft To Sw Cor Thence N 130.7 Ft To Pob Being Pt Of Lot 19 Also All Of Lots 10 Thru Lot 15 & Lots 20 Thru Lot 23 Blk 4; and

WHEREAS, the Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission, on December 20, 2018, held a public hearing at which all persons present were given an opportunity to be heard pursuant to said application in accordance with the requirements of §61.303 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Planning Commission, based on the evidence presented to its Zoning Committee at the public hearing as substantially reflected in the minutes, made the following findings of fact as required under the provisions of §61.402(c) that in “order to approve the site plan, the planning commission shall consider and find that the site plan is consistent with:”

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

On balance, the site plan meets this finding. The *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan* provides mixed guidance with policies supporting preservation of historic resources, collaboration with schools, and redevelopment.

The Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) has found that the former St. Andrew's Church meets the legislative criteria (Sec. 73.05) for designation, indicating the value of the church as an historic resource. The Historic Preservation Chapter includes the following specific provision:

- 4.3. Protect undesignated historic resources.

Preservation of the former church is also in conformance with similar policies in the *District 10 Como Community Council Plan*, which is an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan.

Specifically, the following applies:

- HLU 4.1: Support programs, studies, and policies that serve to preserve its historical character.

Nevertheless, the proposed site plan is consistent with the *Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan*.

The area is a mix of residential and institutional uses and a K – 8 school is a permitted use within the R4 Zoning District. The Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the importance of education institutions in providing “opportunities for Saint Paul and its residents as well as for those who work in the city.” It also acknowledges that “education facilities often provide an identity for specific areas of the city.” The Land Use Chapter includes

moved by _____

seconded by _____

in favor _____

against _____

the following specific provision:

- LU 1.55: Collaborate with public and private elementary and secondary schools in conjunction with construction or major remodeling.

The proposed development is consistent with the *Como Park Community Plan* Neighborhood Goals:

- The stable, residential quality of the neighborhood will be maintained with limited, sensitive development and re-development that enhances the residential quality of the neighborhood.
- The neighborhood will be home to a variety of small and medium sized businesses and institutions offering desirable products and services close to home.
- The introduction to the Housing and Land Use chapter identifies that based on the lack of vacant land, “opportunities for development and re-development will by necessity involve the re-use or replacement of current structures.”

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

The site plan as proposed meets this finding with approved variances. The following standards in the R4 zoning district for density, setbacks, height, parking, and design apply:

- §66.216 – Intent, R4 one-family residential district.
- §66.230 – Residential District Density and dimensional standards.
- §66.232 – Maximum lot coverage.
- §63.207 – Parking requirements by use.
- §63.110 – Building design standards.

Type of Use: Schools are a permitted use. The R1—R4 one-family residential districts provide for an environment of predominantly low-density, one-family dwellings along with civic and institutional uses, public services and utilities that serve the residents in the districts.

Setbacks: The site plan meets the minimum setbacks. In R4 the minimum front and rear setback is 25'. The minimum side setback requirement is 9' for non-residential uses.

Height: The site plan does not meet the maximum building height of 3 stories and 30' in a R4 district. Building height is measured from the established grade to the top of the roof deck. The project is proposing a building height up to 33' 1".

Lot Coverage: The site plan does not meet the maximum 35% lot coverage in a residential district. The proposed building area is 36% lot coverage (30,290 sf building area / 83,491 sf lot area including half the alley). One-half the width of a dedicated public alley adjoining the lot shall be considered as part of the lot, for the purpose of applying lot area and density requirements.

Parking: The site plan does not meet the minimum off-street parking requirement based on one space per Full Time Equivalent employee. The expected staff FTEs requires 86 off-street parking spaces (fractional spaces including .5 are disregarded). The project is proposing a 34 space parking deficiency. The site plan includes: 1) 28 off-street vehicle parking spaces in the existing west lot, 2) removal of 7 off-street parking spaces in the east lot, 3) one required bicycle parking space plus excess bicycle parking of 36 spaces, which allows for a 10% parking reduction, and 4) proposed shared parking for 15 off-street parking spaces with an adjacent church at 1040 Como Ave.

Design standards: Staff has reviewed the site plan in relation to the building design standards and found that all relevant standards are met.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The proposed use is permitted in a R4 one-family residential Zoning District, which provides for uses that serve the residents in the districts. The existing Aula (church) structure is proposed for removal as part of the site plan. At this time the property is not currently designated as historical, but is eligible.

An application is in progress to consider designation of the former church as a Saint Paul

Heritage Preservation Site with a final decision to be determined by the Saint Paul City Council. If the former church becomes locally designated, any proposed alterations to the exterior of the building would need to be reviewed by the HPC. In the event of proposed demolition, the HPC could approve, approve with conditions, or deny the proposed demolition. Any such HPC decision would be subject to appeal to the City Council.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The effect of this specific proposed building on neighboring properties is reasonable. Specific to the findings:

- The stormwater system meets City standards for run-off rate control. The system will consist of pipes buried below grade located on the east side of the building in the proposed play area. In addition, roof drainage shall meet plumbing code requirements.
- The building addition is oriented to the south side of the property towards the street frontage. The building's proposed setbacks meet or exceed the zoning requirement, providing a reasonable distance from the abutting homes.
- The proposed site plan adheres to §63.110 – Building design standards, including delineation of a primary entrance, direct pedestrian connection to the street, building materials, minimum window and door openings, and reducing visual impact of rooftop equipment.
- The setback area to the east is proposed to replace parking with a turf play area and coniferous trees along the street frontage. Existing boulevard trees will be protected where possible and new boulevard trees will be planted as required.
- The east parking lot is currently screened with a wood fence along the alley. The fence shall be relocated within the property where it encroaches on the alley. This offers an opportunity to provide a more durable, opaque fence of sufficient height and density to visually separate the screened activity from adjacent property and to help improve the existing sound and sight buffer. Any fence will need to meet site triangle requirements for vehicles using the alley.
- Off-street parking is proposed to increase from existing based on a Shared Parking Agreement with the adjacent church at 1040 Como Ave and additional bicycle parking. Refuse and recycling will continue in its existing location with alley pick-up.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The existing use is a K – 8 school with 585 current student enrollment. The building addition will allow for classroom space for up to three sections per grade level (648 students). The total staff FTE is expected to increase from 80.5 to 86.5. As a buffer to abutting residential properties, the building addition is centered in the middle of the parcel with a 25' front setback and side yard setbacks of approximately 75' to the east and 80'+ to the west. Fencing along the east and landscaping along the southeast property lines will visually separate the building and play area from the abutting property.

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

The site plan meets this finding. A new building addition shall meet current building and energy codes. The building is oriented to the south corner of the site and exceeds the minimum amount of glazing on all sides, allowing the building to gain solar heat.

The proposed development is located within two blocks minor arterial streets (Lexington Pkwy and Como Ave) with good public transit and off-street bicycle paths, and adjoining Van Slyke Ave is an enhanced bicycle route, making the area conducive to walking, biking, and using public transit rather than driving.

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

The site plan meets this finding. A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) prepared by Spack Consulting with updates through 1/15/2019, was review and accepted by Public Works Transportation and Safety. TIS recommendations requiring changes to the public realm, including a marked pedestrian crossing on Como Ave at Oxford St and time-of-day parking restrictions, shall be implemented as part of the site plan. Public Works Traffic Engineering and TCGIS shall assess additional operational and engineering solutions to improve safety; the school shall implement prescribed solutions as directed by Public Works.

The site plan includes an existing west surface parking lot proposed to expand to 28 spaces, proposed bike racks for at least 37 bicycles, and accessible sidewalks along Como Avenue. The proposed removal of an existing parking lot and curb cut on the east side of the building reduces potential pedestrian and vehicle conflicts on site. On-street parking is permitted on adjoining and nearby streets.

The proposed development is located within two blocks minor arterial streets (Lexington Pkwy and Como Ave) with good public transit and off-street bicycle paths, and adjoining Van Slyke Ave is an enhanced bicycle route, making the area conducive to walking, biking, and using public transit rather than driving.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The utility connections are shown on Sheet C2. Water, Sanitary and Storm sewer services are available in Como Avenue.

Stormwater from the building addition would be piped to an underground detention system located on the east of the property. There's an existing stormwater system under the west parking lot for run-off of the existing site. Stormwater would go out to the public storm sewer in Como Ave at a controlled rate that meets City standards. Drainage maps and HydroCAD modeling to meet the City's stormwater run-off rate control standards were reviewed and approved.

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

The site plan as proposed meets this finding with an approved variance for off-street parking. The minimum off-street parking requirement based on one space per Full Time Equivalent employee (86 spaces required, 34 space deficiency). Off-street parking is proposed to increase from existing based on a Shared Parking Agreement with the adjacent church at 1040 Como Ave and additional bicycle parking. The site plan updated 1/16/2019 includes:

- 28 surface off-street vehicle parking spaces in the west parking lot
- Removal of 7 off-street parking spaces in the east parking lot
- One required bicycle parking space plus excess bicycle parking of 36 spaces, which allows for a 10% parking reduction
- Proposed shared parking for 15 off-street parking spaces with an adjacent church.

The setback areas to the southeast shall be landscaped and the east will be green space used for a play area and stormwater management. A fence exists along the east property line at the alley to visually separate the existing parking area from the abutting property; staff recommends the project provides a more durable, opaque fence of sufficient height and density to help improve the existing sound and sight buffer. Existing boulevard trees will be protected where possible and new boulevard trees planted as required.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The plan proposes one accessible parking space to meet the

ADA standards required for lots up to 25 parking spaces. Required accessible entrances and routes shall be provided per accessibility code. The public sidewalks have accessible crossings.

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

The site plan meets this finding. The site plan includes an erosion and sediment control plan that meets this standard.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Saint Paul Planning Commission, under the authority of the City's Legislative Code, that the application of Rehder and Associates on behalf of Twin Cities German Immersion School for site plan approval to construct a 3-story, 23,500 square foot building addition to an existing school, play area and stormwater management at 1031 Como Ave is hereby approved with the following conditions:

1. Approval of variances for building height and lot coverage, or submittal of an updated site plan that meets Zoning Code density and dimensional standards.
2. Approval of a variance for 34 off-street parking spaces, or submittal of a plan that meets Zoning Code off-street parking requirements.
3. Provide an obscuring wood fence at least 80% opaque and 6' in height along the length of the east property line to buffer the abutting properties.
4. Acceptance of the Traffic Impact Study by the Public Works Transportation Planning and Safety Division. Traffic Impact Study solution recommendations requiring changes to the public realm, including a marked pedestrian crossing on Como Ave at Oxford St and time-of-day parking restrictions, shall be implemented as part of the site plan. Public Works Traffic Engineering and the applicant shall assess additional operational and engineering solutions to improve safety; the school shall implement prescribed solutions as directed by Public Works.