

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 12, 2020 - 3:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor
City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard

PRESENT: DeJoy, Grill, Ochs, and Rangel Morales
EXCUSED: Baker, Edgerton, Hood, and Lindeke
STAFF: Menaka Mohan, Luis Pereira, Samantha Langer, Allan Torstenson, and Peter Warner

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Rangel Morales.

Ford Districts Zoning Code Amendments - 20-009-995 - Zoning Code amendments pertaining to Ford Districts, including district boundary adjustments to match platted streets and regulations for townhouse and multi-family building medium types, supportive housing, religious institutions, lot coverage and signs., 2192 Ford Parkway et al, SE corner of Ford Parkway and Mississippi River Blvd.

Ford Site Master Plan Amendments - 20-010-013 - Ford Site Master Plan amendments pertaining to townhouse and multi-family medium building type, supportive housing, religious institutions, minimum commercial in F6, lot coverage, and the Woodlawn roadway section., 2192 Ford Parkway et al, SE corner of Ford Parkway and Mississippi River Blvd.

Ford Site Master Site Plan - 20-011-817 - Ford site master site plan as required by Zoning Code § 66.953 to demonstrate general compliance with the Ford site master plan, including the required mix of uses within each of the Ford districts., 2192 Ford Parkway et al, SE corner of Ford Parkway and Mississippi River Blvd.

Menaka Mohan gave a PowerPoint presentation on the staff reports (attached) for the Ford Districts Zoning Code Amendments and Ford Site Master Plan Amendments with a recommendation of approval with conditions and exceptions. She presented the Ford Site Master Plan staff report with a recommendation for approval with conditions.

She stated District 15 made no recommendation, and there were no letters in support, and 15 letters in opposition. Public comment was generally opposed to rooftop space above the third floor counting towards the minimum open space requirement, a reduction in the F6 commercial percentage from 10% to 0%, an increase for the 95% lot coverage for certain building types, decrease in setbacks for certain streets, and an increase of the number of units. She said Ryan is not proposing an increase of units.

In response to Commissioner Grill, Ms. Mohan said that the City Council approved a curb and parking on Woodlawn Avenue in 2019. She said the pedestrian plan was passed in 2019 that included policies that new streets have sidewalks on both sides of the street. She said the way that parking worked, was that the door swing was going onto private property, which is why they are proposing the easements on either side for the cars. It is still a very narrow street with 14 feet of through travel for two lanes. It still achieves the small residential feeling.

Commissioner Grill stated concerns about reducing commercial. She said that originally there had been a commercial requirement across most of the districts. At some point it started to be removed from F3 and F4. Now we have F5 the commercial zone and no other commercial requirements throughout the site, particularly on the far south side by the ball field. The residents on that side are going to have very little access to commercial. She is concerned that residents will not have quick access to commercial amenities.

Ms. Mohan said that the distance between the ball field and the lower end of where the commercial starts is a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile or less. She said that the adjustment to the minimum commercial to 0% in the F6 district doesn't mean it would be 0 it only reduces the minimum that they would have to build.

Commissioner Rangel Morales asked for information on the green roofs and what exactly is being proposed in 4b.

Ms. Mohan said the green roof language in the Master Plan was intended to encourage building applicants to use green roofs and to count space next to it towards the open space requirement for that specific lot only, not for the entire site. The language said they must be above the third floor, but as City staff worked with Ryan Companies and looked at the different building types, they realized that the green roof didn't need to be on the third floor or above. The green roof can be on lower floors and still count for the open space requirement to that specific lot.

Ms. Mohan said that none of the park spaces or Civic areas are changing. This is for the open space requirement of the vertical building. The Ford Master Plan already allows useable rooftop space to count toward 50% of open space requirement of the site only, but it is above the third floor only. They are proposing to remove the above third floor limitation. The open space chapter in the Master Plan does not have any amendments to change.

Commissioner Grill said that some of the opposition, particularly the letter submitted by Merritt Clapp-Smith, stated that the original intent to allow for roof top space to count for 50% of the overall open space at a site, to be at the third floor or above, was to avoid interior facing courtyards and provide no sense of open space to passersby.

Ms. Mohan said open space still needs to be on a rooftop. If it was on top of a ground level parking structure it would still need to meet the definition of functional green roof, and there would have to be a public amenities space next to it, and then that could count towards 50% of the 25% requirement of open space.

Tony Barronco, 2192 Ford Parkway, Saint Paul, MN, gave a presentation (attached) on the Ford Districts Zoning Code, Master Plan Amendments and Master Site Plan.

In response to Commissioner Ochs, Mr. Barronco said that they are not recommending changes to setbacks in most of the corridor areas. They agree that along the central water feature plaza area that the seventeen-foot setbacks should be maintained. On Beechwood which is the northern most of the streets, setbacks in the current Master Plan are at 20 feet and they are requesting 14 feet in that area. In the areas to the south the setbacks are currently 16 feet and they are requesting 10 feet. On Yorkshire in the south setbacks are 16 feet and they are

requesting 10 feet. Their goal throughout the zone with the exception of on Beechwood and on Central Parkway is that they have 10 feet setbacks consistently throughout the entire corridor.

Commissioner Rangel Morales asked if the amendments requested were for the entire street, from east to west, not just in certain areas.

Mr. Barronco said that the adjustments they are requesting would be on the east and west stretch of each of the three roadways, Beechwood, Saunders and Yorkshire. It is specifically for those areas that encounter the pedestrian/bike corridor.

In response to Commissioner Ochs, Mr. Barronco explained stormwater management for the site. It will all be collected within the body of the project and feed through central storm traps that are public assets in public rights of way then they will feed into the water feature and exit into Hidden Falls.

Mr. Barronco addresses some of the comments that came up related to retail in the F6 district. This is an unusual district because it is bifurcated into a few areas. All of the other districts are contiguous. With F6 they have two different nodes; a node in the northwest corner of the site which is incredibly distinct from the area in the southeast corner of the same site, and both have the same zoning classification. The design for the northwest corner and programming has advanced a lot further than in the southeast corner since the Master Plan was approved and a redevelopment agreement came through. Affordable housing has been added to that area as part of the City's goal to have affordable housing throughout the site. It's difficult for affordable housing providers to finance retail as part of their projects. These areas allow for office, civic, senior living, and affordable housing. He said they are not opposed to retail, but they are concerned that certain areas won't lease, and it would add to a vacant first floor which detracts from walkability and the public realm. Active civic spaces and residential uses will build that. In terms of the development plan on the northwest corner he said that the Block 1 site plan is currently a medical office building along with two different affordable housing buildings. A workforce building and second building with supportive services. They also intend to have a senior housing on that block that would include a full suite of services from independent living, memory care and assisted living. They also intend to have an office building site. Each of the uses could have uses like a coffee shop, but it isn't seen as a primary use because there are financing challenges. For that reason, they have requested to reduce the minimum commercial in this district to zero. Mr. Barronco said that the area in the southeast corner of the site they have plans for two affordable housing buildings, one to be developed by CommonBond and one by PPL. The plans are to also build an office building or civic use too. This is one of the latest development sites and they don't have plans beyond what is entitled in the zoning district. They are not saying that retail is not a possibility, but based on the use types within the district they would like the flexibility to put it in if it would work, but not required to put it in if it would have difficulty leasing. He is said representatives from PPL and CommonBond are available to explain the difficulties with financing retail in their projects.

Upon questions from the Commissioners, Mr. Barronco said that the characteristics of the southernmost portion of the site are less intuitive for retail. A requirement of a significant amount of square footage is difficult for them because they are concerned that it will not lease. If they are not able to get tenants, it won't help with the walkability and viability of the site. Mr. Barronco

said that this area was one of the original zoning districts of the site. It was thought that it could be the area of the site that could accommodate light office or manufacturing. One of the things less obvious with the balance of the development plan is where that job creator area would go. This is the potential area to do that based on the amount of land, but the office uses and commercial uses like visibility and traffic. There is north and south traffic on Cleveland, but not the benefit of east and west traffic like on Ford Parkway. Mr. Barronco said they would be more receptive to a lower requirement of commercial, but their goal is zero. Mr. Barronco said they don't believe it is a solid plan to build commercial space with the hope that it can be there and then it not be active as opposed to having office, civic space or residential come to the first floor and bring activity to the corridor.

In response to Commissioners questions regarding the townhomes amendment, Mr. Barronco said that their intent had always been that rowhomes would occupy the east half of the block and the one to six-unit homes would occupy the west half of the block. They did not include that in the original submittal. The rowhomes would be purchased and owned. They would be 20 to 24 feet in width to allow more density in those areas and allow for price points to be more attainable for buyers. He said their goal in this area is to form a three story with a four-story pop-up brownstone type of neighborhood. They want to hold the street face where they can so there is a consistent edge from corner to corner. He can't quantify the block lengths, but certainly they would like the aesthetic of those blocks to look like they are a continual rowhome. Even though they are individually owned the building would stretch from the corner of one end to the other corner. He said that all of the lot widths in the F1 district and setbacks would remain the same. The lots are 60-foot lots and can be developed with duplexes, condominiums, single-family or single-family with an accessory dwelling unit.

In response to Commissioners questions regarding the amendment 3b to allow religious institutions in F1, Mr. Barronco said that they have a requirement to add 50,000 square feet of institutional space to the project and they are looking at unique ways to do that. They don't have any particular plans, but they thought a place of worship was an interesting idea. They would like the flexibility of allowing it in the F1 district. It is currently allowed in all other districts.

In response to Commissioners questions regarding the amendment 3a to adjust minimum commercial in F6 to 0%, Mr. Barronco said that they would promote for commercial development. They want to set it up for the best success possible. In the event that they aren't able to get certain use types in there, in particular retail uses, they would like flexibility. It is zoned for commercial use including civic space and office space and that is how they intend to market it, but in their development plan they don't have development happening on that site for 8 to 10 years. If they aren't successful in finding an opportunity to do that, they would look at the rest of the zoning district to determine what could be done.

Merritt Clapp-Smith, 228 E 8th Street, Saint Paul, MN said that she was a former staff person for Planning and Economic Development and worked on the Master Plan. She shared some perspective on some of the intent of the original Master Plan. She submitted a letter stating opposition and support for each amendment (attached). She explained her opposition to amendments 3a, 5a, and 4b.

In response to testimony, Mr. Barronco said they liked the original Woodlawn road section plan, but are proposing some parking for rideshare, delivery and guests. As design advanced and they worked with City staff this proposal of Woodlawn functioning more as a street seemed more adequate in order to meet safety concerns. They are open to working on language regarding building types requirements. They want to have buildings of varying masses and designs to activate streets and embed parking.

No one spoke in support. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Grill moved to approve the staff recommendation to the modifications to the Ford Site Master Plan and Ford Districts Zoning Code Amendments with the exception of amendments 3a, 4b, and 5 listed in Exhibit A- Summary of Ford Master Plan and Zoning Text Amendments. She proposed amending 3a to allow for minimum commercial requirement in the F6 district to be 5%, rather than 10%, that 4b have amended language by staff to allow for approval with a condition for visibility from public right of way, and to deny recommendation of 5 the adjustments to Woodlawn Ave roadway section. Commissioner Grill cited the 2030 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Sections 148,149 and 152 as well as the guiding principles listed in the Ford Site Master Plan for her recommendation. Commissioner DeJoy seconded the motion.

Ms. Mohan said that the Woodlawn redesign reflects current conversations with Public Works staff, current land use policies of the pedestrian plan, current conversations with Fire and Safety and the adopted Plat.

Luis Pereira, Planning Director, added that in the last set of Master Plan Amendments, Amendment 23 read, amend Woodlawn Avenue configuration with the addition of on-street parking to Woodlawn Avenue. That was a formal decision made and approved by the Commission and City Council.

Commissioner Ochs said he disagrees with amendments 1a and 3b because the F1 district should remain neutral and preserve the park like character. Allowing townhomes or religious institutions would deter from the original intent. He also would like clarification on 4a to allow more amenable language to take into consideration the type of building that is being placed there and whether or not that should count towards the max lot coverage.

Commissioner Ochs offered a friendly amendment on these items and Commissioner Grill declined. She has concerns about disallowing a religious institution in any of the zoning districts, and that there would need to be more clarification of 1a from Commissioner Ochs regarding the friendly amendment.

After discussion the motion failed by a vote of 2-2-0.

Yeas - 2 Nays – 2 (Ochs and Rangel Morales) Abstained - 0

After discussion regarding some confusion on why some of the items were before the Committee, Ms. Mohan stated that there are four affordable housing buildings in the F6 district and twelve within the entire site. She stated that there is a development agreement that has

been approved by the City Council that identifies the sites as the affordable housing locations. She said the zoning still applies, but the locations of these buildings were identified prior and adopted as part of the redevelopment agreement between the City and Ryan Companies, but after amendments were past to the zoning and Ford Master Plan in April of 2019. These amendments allowed housing in the F6 district, so when Ryan Companies was working with the affordable housing partners, PPL and CommonBond, the shapes of the buildings started to become more of a reality in the F6 District. They realized having a supportive housing project in the F6 district was not currently allowed. She said as they have been working through the plan the last few months staff has been collecting a list of Master Plan Amendments and Zoning Amendments to reflect the work that led up to the redevelopment agreement. Ms. Mohan said that in the 2019 amendments that went through Planning Commission and City Council, multi-housing as a use was added to the F6 district in the Master Plan prior to the redevelopment plan.

Commissioner Rangel Morales voiced his concerns on some amendments being proposed. He said it seems to undermine the intent and goal of the Master Plan, and he understands the perspective of a lot of people who are in opposition to a lot of the amendments.

Commissioner Grill renewed her motion. Commissioner DeJoy seconded the motion.

Commissioner Grill stated she believed that some of the issues may need more conversation with the full Planning Commission and some additional clarification by staff.

The motion failed by a vote of 2-2-0.

Yeas - 2 Nays – 2 (Ochs and Rangel Morales) Abstained - 0

After discussion it was decided to vote individually on the summary of Ford Master Plan and Zoning Text Amendments listed in Exhibit A.

	Description	Staff Recommendation	Zoning Committee Recommendation
1a	Addition of Townhome to the Allowable Building Type in the F1 Zoning district	Recommend	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 3-1 (Ochs)
1b	Adjust Townhome minimum lot width from 30' to 20'	Recommend with new footnote that it's a per unit figure	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
1c	Adjust Townhouse maximum building width from 150' to 350'	Recommend	Recommend to adjust Townhouse maximum building width from 150' to 350' only on the Woodlawn side

			4 - 0
1d	Adjust Townhouse Maximum lot coverage by building from 50% to 60%	Lot coverage increase not needed; add note that it applies to the entire parcel, not lot under each unit	Recommend approval of staff recommendation with added language from footnote b on page 2 in staff report 4 - 0
1e	Adjustments to the Townhouse minimum setbacks, for properties only adjacent to the shared bike/ped paths, from 10' to 4'	Recommend against	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 3-1 (Ochs)
2a	Adjustment to allow Multi-Family Medium building types in the F2 zoning district	Recommend-eliminating Multi-Family Medium Low and Medium with Multi-family	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
2b	Adjustment to allow Multi-Family Medium building types in the F5 zoning district	Recommend- eliminating Multi-Family Medium Low and Medium with Multi-family	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
2c	Adjustment to allow Supportive Housing in the F6 zoning district	Recommend	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
3a	Adjustment to the minimum commercial in the F6 zoning district to 0%	Recommend	Recommend approval of adjustment to minimum commercial in the F6 zoning district to 5% 3-1 (Rangel Morales)
3b	Adjustment to allow Religious Institution, Place of Worship in the F1 zoning district.	Recommend	No recommendation to Planning Commission

4a	Adjustment to the Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings allowed from 70% to 95% for all applicable building types listed in Table 6.2	Recommend against; add underground parking exclusion instead	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
4b	Adjustment to allow all usable rooftop space to count towards the Minimum Lot Coverage for Open Space.	Recommend	Recommend approval of staff recommendation with amended language 4 - 0
5	Adjustment to the Woodlawn Ave roadway section.	Recommend	Recommend denying adjustment to the Woodlawn Ave roadway section 4 - 0
6	Addition of F Districts to Section 64.502 of the Zoning Code	Recommend	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0
7	Adjust Lot District Boundary Adjustments to Match Platted Streets	Recommend	Recommend approval of staff recommendation 4 - 0

Commissioner Grill made a motion to approve the Ford Site Master Site Plan with a change to the reduction of the minimum commercial requirement from 10% to 5%. Commissioner DeJoy seconded the motion.


The motion passed by a vote of 4-1-0.

Yeas - 3 Nays – 1 (Rangel Morales) Abstained - 0

Drafted by:

 Samantha Langer
 Recording Secretary

Submitted by:



 Menaka Mohan
 City Planner

Approved by:

 Dan Edgerton
 Chair