

From: Laura LaBlanc <laura@fullthought.net>

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2020 11:59 AM

To: *CI-StPaul_PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary <PED-ZoningCommitteeSecretary@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Richardson, Mike (CI-StPaul) <mike.richardson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Deb and Brian <schlickbhm@msn.com>

Subject: Public Comment - Concerns regarding the Rezone request for James Avenue

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

PED Zoning Committee,
ccMike Richardson,

I write to raise concerns about the rezoning request that has been submitted to the City of St. Paul by Chet Funk et al for James Avenue.

I own a property at 444 Lexington Pkwy S Unit 1, St. Paul, MN 55105. My home is one of 2 units in the Maple Hill Condo Association. We are a corner lot at Lexington Pkwy S and James Ave. Our property runs immediately across the street from five of the homes that would be removed by this proposed project on James Avenue.

I bought my home in 2009. Of great value to me is the quiet, single family home street and neighborhood I bought into that is in large part shaped by this section of James Avenue. I did not anticipate that my home could or would become part of a high density block. If this were a commercial corridor, I might expect this dramatic change in the environment I live in. I believe it is relevant as you consider this rezone that neither James Avenue nor Lexington Parkway are a part of a commercial corridor.

The personal loss of neighborhood life and relationships with the few neighbors in direct proximity to my home is significant to me. I also have multiple concerns that should be studied by the City to make a prudent decision on this development. Living on James Avenue I am very familiar with

I would like to request information or a study on the impact on property taxes and property values of homes on residential streets that are in direct relationship to homes that have been rezoned from R4 one family residential to RM2 multi-family residential.

Traffic Study #1 - It appears the development would increase traffic significantly on James Ave increasing the number of left turns from Lexington to James at an uncontrolled intersection. Is this safe? How will it affect safety backing out of our drive onto James Avenue? Our drive is steep, as is James Avenue. Often in winter conditions both our drive and James are very challenging to navigate.

Traffic Study #2 - impact on backup traffic and safety at the intersection where 35E South exit ramp crosses Randolph. This development intends to move residents from this dense housing project onto this off ramp and through this intersection. Crossing the exit ramp from James to go East on Randolph is challenging at current usage due to the high speeds of the off ramp traffic and the backups that can occur at that intersection. It is also a long light. Will there be a build up of traffic on James waiting for the light at different times of day?

Shadow and Air Study: How is this large development going to impact air quality at this intersection, and how will light to my home be affected at different times of the year?

I ask the city to honor your commitment to a Comprehensive Plan for Development in the city. There are undoubtedly many locations on commercial corridors that can more easily support dense housing developments than our humble and small residential street.

Thank you,

Laura LaBlanc
owner and resident
444 Lexington Pkwy South Unit 1
St. Paul, MN 55105

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Laura LaBlanc
Founder and Principal
FullThought
www.fullthought.net

Subject: Objections to Rezoning of 1074-1096 James Avenue

PED Zoning Committee and Mike Richardson, Staff

I represent Laura LaBlanc, the homeowner at the corner of James Avenue and Lexington Parkway. My comments supplement those already submitted by her.

The staff report focuses on the consistency of the proposed development with the changed zoning and goes on to analyze consistency with the comprehensive plans of the City in that context. It ignores these facts:

The property that Ms. LaBlanc lives in is not a rental. It is an owner-occupied two-family building that she purchased as part of a condo association.

James and this portion of Lexington are predominantly single-family homes. The existing zoning is single family. She purchased the home with the reasonable expectation that the area would remain single-family in character.

The area adjacent to the proposed development on Randolph Avenue is zone RM2 and that is where any higher density development should occur. The site on James is not indicated for higher density development in any of the plans of the city, including the 2030 and 2040 Comprehensive Plans.

The proposed plans will severely compromise the access to light and air for the remaining properties north of James.

This block of James Avenue can be accessed only from Lexington Parkway, since the other end of the block exits onto the off ramp from I35., which will force all traffic accessing the proposed development to utilize James Avenue.

This location is not a neighborhood node, not near a retail center, and not on a transportation corridor. Yes, it is convenient to have Trader Joe's near by, but that is hardly a retail center in the sense anticipated by the zoning code.

Other multi-family uses in the area are separated from adjacent single-family homes by steep grade changes that preserve the adjoining character and views. This development would not be and would have the opposite effect.

There are existing single-family homes on Randolph that are already zoned RM2. That is the appropriate location for a development of this type, not James Avenue. This is a request born of opportunistic thinking, not sound policy.

Brian H. Miller
Attorney for Laura LaBlanc
444 Lexington Pkwy South Unit 1
St. Paul, MN 55105

Hello,

I wanted to enter a few thoughts about the proposed multifamily development on and Lexington and mes.

1. With the proposed plan for the development, I am concerned about what the increased traffic flow would mean for traffic on James. It can be difficult to turn left onto Lexington from James, and I worry that too much traffic will end up consistently blocking traffic flow. There was talk about potentially one-waying James down towards 35E, but the light down there is lengthy and can back up from traffic coming off the highway. I would like for any traffic study to include the impact of additional travel on James.

2. It sounds like the plan for the development is market based pricing. I worry about having a lack of affordable housing in any new development, especially knowing that current affordable housing will be replaced with the new development.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeff and Jessica Booker
444 Lexington Parkway S #2

17 June 2020

St. Paul Planning Commission
Zoning Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

We write today to express our concerns with the proposed rezoning from R4 to RM2 for the property addresses 1074-1096 James Avenue. While we recognize the need for more multiple-family housing in St. Paul, as adjacent neighbors to the properties in question, we believe that traffic considerations have not been fully investigated.

During the community public hearing, the homeowners described how James Avenue is now given as a route by Google maps. As property owners who live on the street, we can attest to that and have found that, because drivers are considering that small stretch as a cut-off, people move down our street as speeds inappropriate to a neighborhood. In the winter, as one homeowner tried to relay during the public hearing, the road is particularly dangerous, particularly with those fast moving cars. The grade is steep from the portion of the road at the 35-E off-ramp to the intersection at Lexington – we were told it is 32 feet during the public hearing. The result of this grade, ice/snow, and cars trying to use it as a cut-off is that cars slide dangerously down to the 90-degree right-hand turn at 35E. This is the situation currently. Now we are being asked to consider the RM2 zoning, which will dramatically add drivers who live here to the mix. The property owners showed a proposed plan in which the six houses currently on the street will be replaced with multi-family housing supporting 60 units. Before this rezoning is even considered, we request that the Planning Commission do a traffic study to assess the impact of this new zoning type on the neighborhood.

In addition, with the exception of properties along Snelling or Grand Avenues, it seems that there are no multi-family properties taller than three stories within the Mac-Groveland neighborhood. This proposed four-story (or taller) apartment seems to be out of keeping with other apartments in the neighborhood. Unlike the ones on Snelling or Grand, this proposed development is not being built for access from a major thoroughfare through the neighborhood, but rather on a short, already congested residential street.

Finally, if the proposed rezoning is approved and the plans move forward for the multi-family housing, we would like to understand what recourses are available to us regarding damage to our properties during construction. The structure that is proposed includes two levels of underground parking. We anticipate that this will pose risks to our nearly-100 year old home as piledrivers and other heavy equipment are used in the construction.

Sincerely,

Scott Legge
Michelle Epp
1073 James Avenue