

It's anti-affordable

On July 23, the Saint Paul Planning Commission approved the request by the Dixies/695 development team for CUP and variances – so that they could build their intrusive out-of-place massive building even taller – challenging all zoning codes. Summit Hill residents objected that the building as proposed will be highly detrimental to opportunities for affordable housing in the Summit Hill Area.

This building as designed is unaffordable housing. In addition to sky-high rents, the project contains no publicly funded affordable housing units.

According to the developers at various public meetings, the rent for these new apartments will start at \$1,400 for the smallest units – “alcove” (studio) apartments of around 550 square feet each. Each unit will have its own PTAC heating unit, so residents will pay their heating and cooling on top of their rent. Parking, for those with cars, will cost an additional \$175 per month. One bedrooms will rent at \$1,850 and two-bedroom units \$2,750. The rent in these apartments will be double the going rate in Summit Hill. In the section of Summit Hill where the building will reside, at 695 Grand Avenue, there is a rich mix of middle-density housing types with a wide variety of housing costs — including below-median-rate apartments and condos. The average rent in Summit Hill for a one-bedroom unit is affordable at 50 percent of area median income. The 695 Grand Avenue proposal is luxury housing that will put gentrification development pressure on all of east Grand and lead to the loss of existing NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing).

We don't need more luxury housing in Summit Hill. We need more median housing and more affordable housing.

Marilyn Bach, St. Paul

August 17, 2021

To: Rebecca Noecker, Council Member Ward 2

From : Marilyn Bach
9 Saint Albans Street South
Saint Paul, MN 55105

RE: Opposition to the 695 Grand Avenue Rezoning - File #21-271-810 - Ordinance #21-31

First, thank you for hosting your annual picnic yesterday at Cesar Chavez park . It was good to meet you and members of your excellent staff. And it was reassuring to hear that constituent letters are being read . This letter is in opposition to the proposed Dixies/ 685 Grand Avenue project.

With Covid restrictions, input from Saint Paul residents has been severely hampered . But the restrictions/ ignoring of input from residents in opposition goes well beyond that. Even when the public comments tally showed significant (up to 10 to 1 and over 450 petition signatures) in opposition, the decision makers voted to approve. While the developers and their lawyer are offered as much time as needed to make their case. The neighborhood requested a 10-minute window to allow an attorney to speak on behalf of the opposition at the Planning Commission meeting. This request was denied.

The opposition to this project as proposed has been dismissed as the “complaints of a few neighbors” that lived near the proposed project. But this is simply not the case. More than 450 persons signed a petition in opposition to this project as proposed . ***The signees of the petition in opposition are geographically widespread*** as demonstrated in the attached graphic

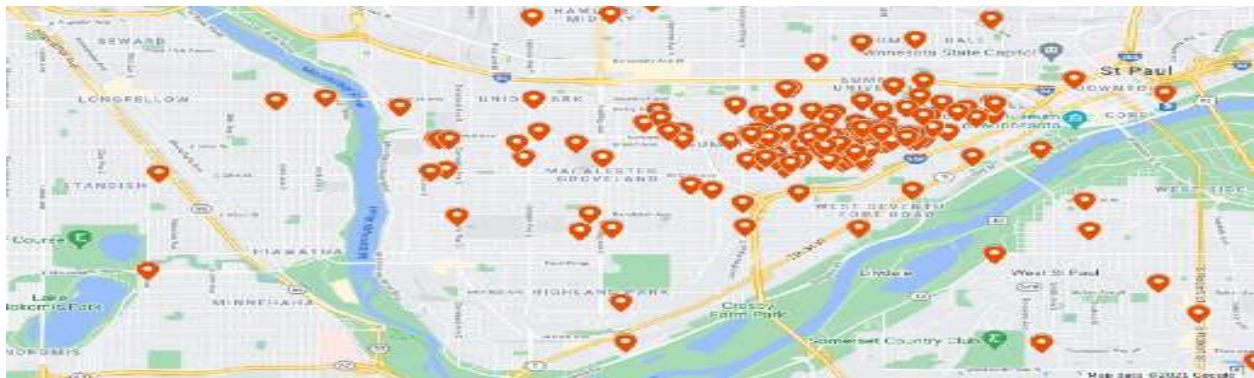
Let me reiterate, we are NOT opposed to development /increased density –we simply want some accommodation to our concerns that this development violates zoning codes for the economic benefit of the 695-development team, with no accommodation to the concerns of a wide geographic swath of Saint Paul residents. The neighborhood is enthusiastically in favor of adding density to scale.

Please hear our voices.

Marilyn Bach
9 Saint Albans Street South
Saint Paul MN, 55105

Constituent Ward 2

Geographic dispersion of petition signers in Opposition to 695 Grand Avenue Rezoning - File #21-271-810 - Ordinance #21-31



From: Baudler Ellen <+16514687927>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 9:51 AM
To: CouncilHearing_English (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing_English@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Voice Mail (1 minute and 34 seconds)

Hi, my name is Ellen Baudler. I live in Saint Paul and I am calling in opposition to the proposed new housing commercial building at the current Dixies location on Grand Ave. The housing proposed for that building is not affordable by any stretch and it's certainly is not affordable to people who work in the neighborhood, who should also get to live there. It's also a way too tall for the area and I really worry that buildings like that are gonna make Grand Ave lose what makes it an interesting and vibrant place. We do need housing. We need dense housing, so I'm not opposed to building there.

However, it has to fit into the neighborhood and it has to be affordable to people who work in the neighborhood. The people who serve us our coffee, serve us our groceries. The rents are just mindboggling - that you would call that affordable. OK, thank you for taking this message.

You received a voice mail from [Baudler Ellen](#).

From: Peterson, Janis (CI-StPaul) <janis.peterson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:09 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 Grand Avenue

A call was received from Rosalyn Goldberg of 1023 Grand Avenue, her phone is #651-206-1742. She is in disagreement with the 695 Grand Avenue project. She has been a resident of the Grand Avenue area for over 40 years and stated that this is totally an economic issue and does not belong on Grand Avenue. This is twice as big as it should be and does not belong in the neighborhood. 90% of the neighbors agree with her position.

From: RENE J MEYER-GRIMBERG <rene.me@mac.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 11:52 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Ord 21-31- Voting Aug. 11 -695 Grand zoning

Greetings,

These two images summarize public comments sent to the Summit Hill Association, District Council ZLU-First until June 12, second after June 12.

Comments are more differentiated than for or against- development is needed (most opinions) Just not for this design.

Thank you
Rene Meyer-Grimberg



2	groups		
89	oppose		70%
3	considerable concerns, no follow up letter		2%
1	mostly favor concerns		1%
34	support		27%
			0%
methodology: repeat letters = 1 count (most recent), two people same letter/household = 2; two people two letters same address/household = 2; group letters – not sure?			

From: Trisha Groth <trisha.groth@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 15, 2021 2:59 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Please remove parking minimums for future developments

I am a St Paul resident and don't support parking minimums, such over-investment in one mode of transportation.

Thank you,

Trisha Groth

From: Thomas Keeler <keelerthomasj@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 12:01 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Please vote against Dixies

Too much traffic. People bring their cars and t will turn into Selby/Snelling

Yes I live in St Paul, on Goodrich

Tom

From: Unavailable <+16123868117>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 9:55 AM
To: CouncilHearing_English (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing_English@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Voice Mail (59 seconds)

My name is Virginia Kraus. I live at 520 Grand Hill, St. Paul. I am calling to voice my objections to the planned 695 Dixie's five story luxury apartment development. It would be such a sad and ugly addition to our neighborhood and so disruptive for property owners. I hope that these opinions will be issued in the record and the City Council will deny the project. Thank you. Again, Virginia Kraus, 520 Grand Hill, 612-386-8117.

You received a voice mail from [Unavailable](#).

From: Mark Lindley <marklindley6@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 10:12 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: City Council meeting: 695 Grand Avenue development

Good morning. I am writing to express my strong support of the issue you are addressing at tomorrow's City Council meeting (Ord. 21-31, the application of St Albans LLC to rezone property at 695 Grand from B2 Community Business District to T3 Traditional Neighborhood District, amending Chapter 60 of the Legislative Code pertaining to the zoning map, and denying the rezoning out of the EG East Grand Avenue Overlay District.)

As a resident of Grand Avenue, I believe this project is important to the future of not only Grand Avenue, but the Summit Hill area and the city itself. It includes the combination of living space and retail establishments that make urban living so desirable. It is attractive and well designed. And the developers have proven themselves committed to working with the community, s they have repeatedly reached out to, listened to, and adopted ideas from community residents.

I have read many of the letters in opposition to this project. Opponents have touted the volume of messages in opposition. I should point out that (a) many of these are repeated messages from individuals who have corresponded multiple times, and (b) they are overwhelmingly from residents who live adjacent to the development: on St. Albans, the 600-700 block of Summit, and Grotto avenues. We cannot let a vocal minority have an outsized influence on a community-wide project.

Opponents also make much of their belief that this development would somehow impact the "historic nature" of Grand Avenue. I don't understand that argument. This development would be within a mile of a tattoo parlor, a hemp shop and a business that sells beanbag furniture — all businesses I welcome to the neighborhood.

After a long, difficult year, I am glad that anyone has an interest in investing in our community. The fact that this is a homegrown project is even more impressive.

I encourage the Council to approve this project. Thank you.

All the best,

Mark Lindley

Mark Lindley
marklindley6@gmail.com
630-352-6067

From: PATTERSON THOMA <+16512251763>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 10:32 PM
To: CouncilHearing_English (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing_English@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Voice Mail (1 minute and 33 seconds)

My name is Thoma Patterson, my address is 703 Linwood Ave, Saint Paul. I'm calling about the 695 Grand Ave Dixie's project proposal. I obviously live close to the Dixie's property. My wife and I patronized Dixies. We're very opposed to this project. It's too big, it's too tall, is out of character with the neighborhood. It doesn't even come close to complying with current zoning rules. It could change the character of Grand Ave on that block and couldn't be a precedent for future changes which would end Grand Ave as we know it. I'm very opposed to it. My wife is not here at the moment. Sally's her name. We request that it be denied until the project can be brought into scale.

You received a voice mail from [PATTERSON THOMA](#).

From: Carrie Reay <carriereay@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 10:15 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: RE: ZONING for Dixie's / 695 Grand Project

Hello!

I am writing to encourage you to REJECT the re-zoning proposal requested by the developer of the Dixie's / 695 Grand Project. The proposed scale of this project is far too large for its footprint, doesn't include enough affordable housing and will negatively impact the residences adjacent to it and the neighborhood overall. Grand Avenue already suffers from oversized development sitting empty (old Pier One space, abandoned North Face), please don't double down and approve this monstrosity. There are better ways to provide housing that would maintain the character of the neighborhood. Please learn from the mistakes made in Uptown Minneapolis, the character of that neighborhood is GONE.

I am a Minneapolis resident, the 6th generation of my family born in St Paul. It is a city near and dear to my heart, our child attends school in St Paul and we spend a lot of time and resources there. The rejection of this proposal can only reinforce to developers that the zoning rules exist for a reason, will protect the character of this neighborhood and protect the residents that have already invested in this community.

thank you
Carrie Reay
1907 Ulysses Street NE
Minneapolis MN 55418

From: John Reay <jsreay@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 12:37 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Zoning of Dixies development

Being a 5th generation St Paul native, I remember when the small shops served the locals. I remember the growth of the street when folks from other areas found those shops and others unique and

interesting, and traffic density grew. I remember when national chains invaded and brought yet another type of customer to the street.

I remember when those national brands started to abandon the street and the 'uniqueness' faltered - and has mostly died since.

And now three interesting and unique restaurants are being replaced by large apartment housing (proposed). Will that bring new excitement, development of small businesses, and less dense traffic issues? I don't think so.

Today I frequent Tavern on Grand and have a difficult time finding parking along the street and in the lots adjacent. Will a huge, oversized building without parking help me enjoy their Shore Lunch?

Please veto all zoning changes that would allow the further destruction of what was once a unique and treasured experience.

John Reay
2283 Brewster St. #3
Saint Paul, Mn 55108

651 330-8208

From: Eric Ruhland <dr.ruhland@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 6:52 PM

To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Ord 21-31 Rezone 695 Grand Property from B2 to T3 File #21-271-810 695 Grand Rezone File #21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variencies

My name is Dr. Eric Ruhland

I live at 790 Summit Ave, St Paul, MN 55105.

My businesses are at 377 Dayton Ave, St Paul, MN 55102 and 2057 Randolph Ave.

I own the St Paul Pet Hospitals, went to the school at the University of MN at the St Paul campus and have restored a home at 790 Summit Ave over the past 7 years.

I dont think I need to explain my disdain for this project or the community's attitude towards it. You get it. If you were in our shoes you would feel the same way. I came this neighborhood and this city to build my home and business because it WAS NOT Uptown, Edina, Woodbury, or Minneapolis. I and my neighbors love the history and charm of Summit/Grand Ave and not one resident in this area is in favor of this.

We are not opposed to growth, change, and development. We ARE opposed to the city and builders coming to our neighborhood and telling us what we NEED. We DO NOT NEED a massive, non

conforming suburban development on Grand Ave. It will open the floodgates to tacky, untimely, unthought developers looking to parasitize what so many have fought to preserve.

These builders are lying about fiscal constraints to increase the size and scope of the project. Furthermore it is an irrelevant AND against zoning code to take financial consideration for changing a zoning code! This is absolutely ridiculous. When I restored my home and had to follow HPC guidelines I did not go back and tell HPC, "I can't afford my historic \$10,000 back door so you're going to have to deal with it." That didn't happen. I, like all of my neighbors, adherer to the zoning codes and Historic Preservation guidelines because it is for the betterment of ALL of us. It's a pain. It's not convenient. However it is what our predecessors have done to make this district unique and attractive.

To further add insult to injury the builders ARE NOT ADDRESSING the issue of affordable housing. Adding studio apartments for a base price of \$1200(Heat, electric, AC, WIFI extra) will continue to gentrify the neighborhood and make living in Grand/Summit unattainable for desperately needed workers in our city.

It is insane to think that the neighborhood is against this project at a ratio of 10:1(See the Summit Hill report) and this is still even being discussed. 10:1, nothing in politics is that simple.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric Ruhland-

--

Dr. Eric Ruhland *Owner*
St. Paul Pet Hospital
Cell: **651-238-6815**
Office: **651-789-6275**
Fax: **651-225-0869**

From: Shannon O'Toole <sotoole.esq@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 9:00 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Fwd: ORD 21-31 OPPOSE

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul)** <Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: Wed, Aug 11, 2021 at 7:07 AM
Subject: RE: ORD 21-31 OPPOSE
To: Shannon O'Toole <sotoole.esq@gmail.com>

Dear Shannon,

Thank you for sharing your perspective on the proposed redevelopment at 695 Grand. I have been reading your messages and the other testimony we're receiving carefully in preparing to make my decision on this issue. If you would like your email added to the public record, please email Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

I have been extremely careful not to discuss the details of this redevelopment proposal with any private party so as not to violate my responsibilities under the law and I do not remember ever making a comment like what has been reported. I fully intend to vote today.

Thanks again for taking time to write to me.

Best,

Rebecca

Rebecca Noecker | Saint Paul City Councilmember, Ward 2

[15 West Kellogg Blvd – Suite 310B | Saint Paul, MN 55102](#)

651.266.8622 | rebecca.noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Stay connected to Ward 2! [Sign up for quarterly e-newsletters](#), [like us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

From: Shannon O'Toole <sotoole.esq@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, August 9, 2021 11:43 AM

To: Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul) <Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: ORD 21-31 OPPOSE

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

Hello Rebecca. Perhaps you have read my submissions to the Planning Commission or seen my statement from the hearing. I have made arguments based upon the law and facts as they stand, but like the hundreds of others who have signed petitions and given public comment, it has fallen on deaf ears. Please indulge me one last time on the issues of T3 zoning, affordable housing, and conflict of interest.

T3 zoning is for major transit corridors and is meant to work in concert with existing small area plans and other zoning. As you of course know, 695 Grand is in a state and federal historic district and subject to the East Grand Avenue Overlay District. The planned building is completely out of character with that required by the existing small area plan and the Overlay District; this is a case of the T3 zoning being used to contravene the existing zoning. Also, Grand Avenue is relatively narrow, and St. Albans is 34', i.e., really narrow. Grand Avenue is not now and never will be, according to Planning Commissioner Reilly, a major transit corridor. T3 zoning is inappropriate for East Grand Avenue and particularly when it is implemented for this very much too large project.

There is a substantial amount of affordable housing now on Grand Avenue, but not enough. Reportedly the owner of two such apartments next to the intended 695 project has indicated his interest in tearing down the affordable housing he owns to build his own 5+ story luxury apartment building. True or not, it is a real pressure and now that no parking will be required, the pressure on building owners to tear down and build much bigger has increased substantially. The 695 Grand luxury apartment project will reduce affordable housing and drive up rents - that has happened around the city and particularly on University Avenue. It is entirely unclear why the City Council would endorse luxury housing when its ill effect upon the existing affordable housing in the neighborhood is guaranteed.

Prior to this latest plan by the Kenefick family, I had patronized the restaurants at 695 Grand for decades. Management there has been telling anyone who would listen for some years that **you** told Peter Kenefick that he could have whatever he wanted on that parcel. Accordingly, I expect that you will not be voting or commenting on this project in any way since you have already been dealing with the developer of this very controversial project that has garnered more negative neighborhood reaction than even parking meters. I recall that you told us repeatedly when I was on SHA that the city attorney advised you that you could not meet with just one side on issues that could become controversial because then you could not vote. If I am misinformed and the Kenefick family representative lied, I implore you to vote against this rezoning. Thank you.

Shannon O'Toole

[223 Avon Street](#) South

Saint Paul, MN 55105-3319
612-750-3393

sotoole.esq@gmail.com

--

Shannon O'Toole
223 Avon Street South
Saint Paul, MN 55105-3319
612-750-3393
sotoole.esq@gmail.com

Re: Ord 21-31 Rezone 695 Grand Property from B2 to T3

File #21-271-810 695 Grand Rezone
File #21-269-061 695 Grand CUP and variances

Dear Council Members and Mayor Carter:

I write in OPPOSITION to the proposed rezoning and accompanying variances.

I write as a former president of the Summit Hill Association and as a former chair of St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission.

BOTTOM LINE: No one opposes development of the parcel in question. Opposition arises from the outsize scale of *this* proposal. The developers assert financial considerations compel the project's design. Financial considerations are explicitly prohibited by ordinance as a basis for rezoning.

In addition, the proposal does nothing to address the City's commitment in the 2040 Plan to equity in housing. In fact, it concentrates wealth to the detriment of the city as a whole.

BACKGROUND: Faced with neighborhood opposition to an earlier proposal for the site, the owner of the property enlisted the help of a developer. The developer shrewdly invited the Summit Hill Association to participate in the design of a new proposal. Three members of the SHA board, in good faith but without board consent, chose to participate. One of the trio serves on the SHA's Zoning and Land Use Committee and also serves on the City's Planning Commission.

The ad-hoc and unauthorized trio agreed on a plan with the developer. The trio presented their plan to the SHA Land Use Committee, which, despite vociferous opposition, deferred to the trio's experience. And so it continued, all the way to the city council. Each committee, board, and commission deferred to its predecessor, all of them ultimately relying on the unauthorized conversation of three members of the SHA board with the developer.

Most dismaying to the neighborhood was the failure of the planning commission and its committees to apply criteria in city ordinance to the proposal. At least one member of the commission expressed surprise at the very concept. Notably, the member of the commission who voted against the proposal applied the legally mandated criteria. His eloquent written statement is part of the record.

Meanwhile, well over 400 people have signed a petition protesting the scale of the development.

CITY ACTION: City staff endorsed the proposal, choosing in its report not to emphasize criteria in the zoning code but words in the city's plan that encourage new development. Absent in the report was serious attention to the plan's commitment to the Missing Middle. An illustration in the plan is worth a thousand words:

Benefits of Missing Middle Housing

The "missing middle" is a segment of the housing market that contains small-scale multifamily or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family neighborhoods. It is a land use, economic development and urban design strategy that allows cities to support walkable, transit-supportive neighborhoods

without significantly increasing densities in predominantly single-family neighborhoods. Missing Middle housing provides more housing choice and therefore allows the city to better adapt to housing trends and market cycles. It is more sensitive to neighborhood context, allowing for gradual transition from Urban

Neighborhoods to Mixed-Use areas and/or Neighborhood Nodes. Missing Middle housing types include accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, courtyard apartments, bungalow courts, mansion-style multi-family and multiplexes. Excellent examples of these housing types can be found throughout Saint Paul.



The colored portion of this illustration, with a few tweaks, could be Grand Avenue, yet city staff would substitute the illustrated "mid-rise" building that dwarfs its neighbors. And potentially destroys the very diversity of scale the Missing Middle calls for.

The city staff report gives little if any attention to other elements of the City's plan. Most shocking, given the naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) that currently exists on Grand Avenue, is attention to equity in housing.

The proposed development will rent an alcove (in layman's terms a studio) for \$1,400 a month. Using 30% of gross income as a figure for personal budgeting, this assumes a tenant's annual gross income of \$52,000 a year. A two bedroom unit will rent for \$2,750 a month and gross annual income of \$110,000.

The potential for these unprecedented rents to drive out NOAH is well-established.

The proposal contains no units of affordable housing. This absence is particularly egregious as the city begins to consider the adoption of an Inclusive Zoning ordinance. That ordinance, like the one already adopted in Minneapolis, would require residential development of any kind, with or without public subsidies, to include affordable housing.

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION:

1. The Summit Hill neighborhood, by petition and in public testimony, has expressed overwhelming opposition to *this* proposal, even as it expresses support for development of the property.

2. City staff recommendations are based on selective application of the City's 2040 Plan and careless disregard for criteria spelled out in city ordinance for rezoning.
3. The proposal does nothing to address inequality and lack of affordable housing in St. Paul. In fact, it does the reverse.

REQUEST:

The City Council should oppose luxury housing in a massive structure at the expense of existing affordable housing. It should strive to encourage diversity and equity in housing by refusing to grant the requested rezoning and accompanying svariances.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles Skrief
773 Goodrich Avenue
St. Paul, MN

From: Daniel Tesch <dannytesch@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 5:06 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: 695 grand avenue development project

Dear city council members

Please let it be known for the record my strong opposition to this project. As a resident of 30 St. Albans street I have major concerns with the affect this proposed project will have on traffic as well as the aesthetic and historic nature on the Neighborhood. The grand/st Albans neighborhood is unique to the twin cities and St. Paul. This project will forever alter one of the remaining beautiful neighborhoods. It will also go against the well thought out concepts of 3 story limits. I implore the council to vote against the project as proposed.

Daniel Tesch 30 St. Albans street South

From: Unavailable <+16513247555>
Sent: Thursday, August 5, 2021 10:14 AM
To: CouncilHearing_English (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing_English@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Voice Mail (1 minute and 19 seconds)

Hello, my name is Mary Wagers. My address is 2787 Dellwood Avenue and I am calling about the Dixie project at 695 Grand Ave. I am asking that the City Council members vote no against the

project. This project is not Grand Ave. The proposed building is way too big. It does not fit what Grand Ave is. I grew up in the area I grew up in Ramsey Hill and I still patronize Grand Avenue, all the restaurants, the shops and so I know what Grand Ave is. This is building is not Grand Avenue. It would be an eyesore in the neighborhood. The only reason that the builders want to build it is purely for economic reasons, financial reasons. Please vote no. My phone number is 651-324-7555. Thank you.