



March 20, 2024

To: Kady Dadlez
Department of Planning and Economic Development
City of Saint Paul, Minnesota
kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

From: Union Park District Council

Re: United Village Phase 1 Development (hotel)
variance appeal – hotel drop off

The Union Park District Council Land Use Committee met on March 18, 2024 and the UPDC Board of Directors met on April 3, 2024. The following variance appeal was discussed:

- Hotel – drop off (entrance drive)
 - required = maximum of 60 feet
 - proposed = full length from Simpson to Asbury
 - UPDC position: SUPPORTS

UPDC COMMENTS:

The issue is not the length of the driveway, but the location of the entrance. The reason is that Ramsey County will only allow curb cuts at Asbury and Simpson. Because of this, on the University side of the hotel there is no option for a shorter driveway.

The Planning Commission stated:

“The decision to site the driveway parallel to University Avenue is a choice made by the applicant and does not constitute a practical difficulty.”

From the perspective of a visitor arriving by car, there is no significant advantage of University over Asbury, Spruce, or Simpson.

From the perspective of a visitor arriving by transit, University or Asbury are more convenient than Spruce or Simpson.

From the perspective of our neighborhood businesses, University is far superior to Asbury, Spruce, or Simpson.

The Planning Commission stated:

“The intent of these comprehensive policies is to create a safe and pedestrian friendly environment. The driveway design is contrary to these policies.”

However, UPDC believes that the proposed driveway design takes pedestrians and pedestrian safety seriously:

- the flow of pedestrians are separated from the flow of vehicles
- there is a direct pedestrian connection from the sidewalk to the entrance

Union Park District Council strongly supports a hotel entrance on the University side so that the economic benefits of the new hotel extend to businesses beyond United Village. UPDC believes that the proposed driveway design addresses the needs of pedestrians and transit riders. Because of these factors, UPDC supports the requested driveway variance.

Thank you,

Sarah Dvorak, Union Park District Council President