



**NORTH
LOOP**
NEIGHBORHOOD

**North Loop Neighborhood Association
Planning & Zoning Meeting Notes
November 16, 2016
6:00 P.M.**

Heritage Landing Community Room, 415 1st Street North

- I. November Board Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M.
- II. Eight committee members were in attendance: DJ Heinle, Kelly Nelson, Mark Hill, Neil Reardon, Francesco Parisi, Alice Eichholz, Sydney Anderson, and Darwin Lookingbill.
- III. **A motion is made, seconded, and approved by the Board to approve the Board Meeting Agenda.**
 - a. Artic Cat had to cancel its presentation; it has rescheduled for January.
- IV. **A motion is made, seconded, and approved by the Board to approve the October 2016 Board Meeting Minutes.**
- V. United Properties – Gordy Stofer
 - a. This is the second time that United is presenting on this development to the Committee; it has also presented once to the Board. It has also gone through one round of submittals to the City and will be back in front of the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) on December 13.
 - b. Gordy highlights the changes that have been made since the last meeting in September. The design is a modern interpretation of a classic warehouse building and is a response to the demands in the market for such space. The focal point of the development is the outdoor space between this new building and Loose Wiles. There will also be microunits along 3rd Street, forming a residential component of the parking structure, the placement of which is a reaction to the City's and residents' desire to activate 3rd Street. Many retailers and restaurants have expressed interest in the spaces.
 - c. The current area, being a superblock, is difficult to traverse. Pathways between 7th and 8th will provide valuable access across the area. Future connections that can be made to the property owned by Shaffer Richardson on other side of 3rd should also be considered. United wants the plaza area to be as activated and energized as much as possible. As such, it has hired the Musicant Group,

which has worked on the McNamara Center and 333 South 7th, to address the space. It plans for the plaza to be the social center of the North Loop – a place for intergenerational use, active all day, for those living in, working in, and visiting the neighborhood, throughout the entire year. There will be permanent design and operations and programming plans that will feature both every day and celebratory activities. There will also be lots of seating, pet accommodations, games to play, concerts, movies, fire pits – perhaps even a curling court. The space is large (14,250 square feet), so there is a lot of opportunity to make it great. The alleyway will present flexible space as well. The programming of the area will be very different than that on Marquette, which is much smaller and specific to office users.

- d. The design of the parking ramp has been reworked and now accents the 6 floors of microunits (under 500 square feet, highly amenitized). The first floor will feature the lobby and amenity space. The building will have a rectilinear form to reflect the existing pattern throughout the neighborhood; it will also have painted metal panels for exteriors, rusted steel like the T3 building, and brick panels – it will have similar materiality as existing buildings in the area, but expressed in a more modern way. The structure needs to be open for ventilation, but sight lines are to be blocked. The exterior will be patterned to portend with a train car as a module and the levels will be lit from the interior so that the eye is attracted to the surface of the building, rather than the cars inside of it. This type of building doesn't really exist anywhere yet. There will also be lots of attention given to animating the first floor and the plaza area. There will be 134 below grade parking stalls and 270 above grade. The City Council has refused to approve any new above ground parking, but that refusal doesn't impact this project (and the City hasn't mentioned this so far) because these spaces are accessory and not principal parking. The proposal is compliant with the zoning code. A traffic study examining the proposed entries and exits has not yet been completed.
- e. There will be a bridge element, at the third story level, which will provide connectivity between the office building and the parking structure. There is value in bridging over the rail corridor, which has been significantly degraded. Sun and shadow studies have been conducted as part of the HPC submittal (page 23). The study shows that the area goes into shadow about 5:00 P.M. in July. There will also be an outdoor terrace area for commercial tenants. There is some concern voiced about the precedent that the bridge may set.
- f. Francesco notes that 5 homeowners' associations from buildings potentially affected by the proposed development have not been contacted.
- g. United has presented to the Committee of the Whole, which is a joint group that includes the Planning Commission and the HPC. United had incorporated the committee's feedback and made a formal resubmittal on October 29; it will be going back in front of the HPC on December 12. This is preliminary and technical review, with a much more rigorous review occurring in January. United also met with the Park Board, which is enthusiastic about this public space. The Board will be participating in the design efforts and United will seek the Board's approval.
- h. The current height of the building is 140 feet, plus an additional 14 feet for mechanical equipment. Regarding the height of the building, United appreciates the neighborhood's concern; however, the proposed height falls within the zoning ordinance. United claims that, despite it obeying the letter of the law, it is still taking the brunt of the storm.

- i. HPC guidelines 3.22 and 3.27 read that the maximum height is 140 to a building's parapet. Francesco notes that the proposed building will not agree with the surrounding buildings; the elevations are misleading, as they display a discrepancy of 27% between building heights as a discrepancy of 9%. There have been 600 people who have signed a petition on change.org in opposition to the height of the building. Residents iterate that they want the NLNA Board to represent residents, and not just office owners. United's architect explains that, at the street level, for a pedestrian, it is much more difficult to discern the height of buildings, especially those between 6 and 9 stories tall. The ground floor, with clear glass and lots of activity, will be what is most visible. The street level experience will be connected to the plaza, with the activity in the alley connecting it all. The design now has the building pushed closer toward the lofts, so that there is more green space around the building, providing a better pedestrian experience. The first floor will have a fitness area, community space, and a lobby.
- j. United is in support of tree initiative and wants to have as many trees as possible planted.
- k. There is a question about how the space belonging to Herschel Lofts will be distinguished from the public area and concern voiced regarding potential public use of the private space that the HOA pays for and maintains. Gordy is happy to meet with the HOA to look at the space, address its concerns, and come up with a solution together.
- l. Neighborhood is still missing an indoor meeting space. Could it be in the development in space facing the park? United can conduct a study to see if it is feasible.
- m. Service to Freehouse will be moved to the alley and there won't be much service for parking structure and microunits. Service and delivery trucks will come in off of 7th. There is not a lot of loading to Freehouse in the first place; most of the weekend the alley will be shut down for pedestrians, as service and deliveries will occur during the week. The alley is 42 feet wide; there will be 11-12 feet on either side for protected pedestrian walkways. There will also be a separate loading area for residents of the microunits, with the drive-in area able to accommodate a box truck.
- n. Living space of the microunits has to be at least 200 feet; they will rent for approximately \$3 per square foot. United plans to commit to retail on corner, but it ultimately will depend on the market.
- o. There is definitely a necessity for bike parking, especial for restaurants in the area. The Park Board and the City both will also really want bikes, too.
- p. The neighbors present want United to lower the height of the building and lose the green space.
- q. Gordy is requesting a letter of support for the project from the Board. No variances are being requested at this time. There is an application for a conditional use permit that deals with platting, required as the development will be on multiple parcels owned by one company. Note is made that mechanical systems can't occupy more than 10% of roof surface.
- r. Note is made that the Planning and Zoning Committee is a voluntary committee, without standing to adjudicate issues; however, elected officials do seriously consider the letters of support that the Board provides.
- s. United's architects explain that, regarding building height, inconsistency is the only consistency in the North Loop. For example, the Smack Shack is one floor; an 8-story building is right next to it. There is tremendous variation

throughout the Washington Avenue corridor, except between 7th and 9th. Consistency in height is a City Beautiful concept – in reality, buildings are built for capitalist purposes and are restrained by finances.

- t. **Motion is made to have United return to present again after shadow studies have been conducted and provided to the six HOAs (as stated during the August 31 board presentation); after the lawn issue with Hershel Lofts has been discussed; after the renderings have their discrepancies removed and have been revised to reflect accurate scales; and to withhold any future motion until that time; is seconded, and is approved by the Committee (5 in favor; 2 opposed [Neil; and Kelly]; 1 abstains [Alice]).**

VI. Committee Business

- a. Neighbor Comments
 - i. There are no neighbor comments.
- b. Subcommittees Updates
 - i. Jo has been accepted as park chair!
 - ii. The Great River Landings project has been fully funded.

VII. Any additional concerns

- a. There are no additional concerns.

VIII. New Business

- a. There is no new business.

Adjourned at 7:56 P.M.