



**NORTH
LOOP**
NEIGHBORHOOD

**North Loop Neighborhood Association
Planning & Zoning Meeting Notes
November 15, 2017
6:00 P.M.**

Heritage Landing Community Room, 415 1st Street North

1. November Planning & Zoning Meeting called to order at 6:07 P.M.
2. Eleven of fifteen committee members were in attendance: Fred Dawe, Aiyana Ruggiero, Alice Eichholz, Jerrit Bromley, Francesco Parisi, Zakery Schaaf, Mark Huting, Erik Mahn, Jackie Peacha, Kris Lang, and Joe McErlane.
3. **A motion is made by Alice, seconded by Francesco, and unanimously approved by the Committee to approve the agenda (with the month edited to November).**
4. **A motion is made by Mark, seconded by Joe, and unanimously approved by the Committee to approve the October 2017 Meeting Minutes.**
5. 323 Washington Avenue North – J'von Sims, SignMinds, Inc.
 - a. An application is being made for a historical variance and for a certificate of appropriateness for two signs for Amazon on the exterior of the T3 building. They are requesting to exceed the height maximum requirements designated in a heritage preservation area. On the south and east elevations, vistas are blocked by the highway and by other buildings from Washington Avenue. The sign will be just over 40.13 square feet (32 square feet is the maximum). The sign will be illuminated.
 - b. Other tenants would have to go through the same process if they are looking to exceed the maximum allowed.
 - c. A request is made for a letter of support for the historic variance and certificate of appropriateness.
 - d. **A motion is made by Alice, seconded by Mark, and unanimously approved by the Committee to approve the letter of support for the historic variance**

and certificate of appropriateness. (Jackie will allow two days for any edits to be addressed.)

6. Restaurant at 4th Street and 5th Avenue – Greg Cuda, Derived Development Group, LLC + ESG
 - a. Aron Rosith, ESG also presents. The firm has worked on other neighborhood restaurants including Bar La Grassa, Parlor, and the Hewing Hotel.
 - b. The food hall concept is a growing trend in the restaurant industry; the concept here is similar, but with a few nuances. This food hall will be organized under one local ownership structure (with one liquor license), which will bring in aspiring chefs who cannot start their own brick and mortar restaurant. The idea is for the food hall to act as an outlet to explore culinary ideas. This business incubator is somewhat like a “home” for food trucks. There will be six separate kitchen venues, highlighting both food and beverage. The concept is not as compatible in industrial warehouses; the new construction will suit the concept much better.
 - c. The structure is to be built atop the existing slab. The soils are terrible on site and as a result, the restaurant will be built on the already established foundation. No structures will be built on the existing green space. There will be bar spaces on both the first and second floors; facing 5th Avenue, there will be both inside and outside venues. A café will be on the side closer to the adjacent condo building, Bookman Stacks. There will also be a lounge area for remote work space and a communal dining component, which will utilize a paging system and pick-up service. The top floor will provide an outdoor patio, which will highlight uninterrupted sightlines of downtown. The exterior will have an all brick base and will feature metal paneling at higher elevations. There will be an entry angled toward 4th Street will serve as the main entrance.
 - d. Greg has already met with Bookman Stacks and is very cognizant of the need to be a good neighbor and the potential for a synergistic partnership with the residents.
 - e. Alice inquires as to how much space is outside and what happens when there is inclement weather. There is approximately 2,200 square feet of outside space. The plan is to utilize heat lamps for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year; there will also be an outdoor fire component on the lower level.
 - f. Mark asks if it is possible to incorporate more than the required amount of bike parking, which Greg says they would be more than happy to consider. The importance of lighting, in terms of both safety and ambiance, is stressed. There will be ornamental trees at different heights and not a tall uniform canopy. The integral role that landscaping will play in this development is also stressed by the Committee.
 - g. Mark suggests that, if the green space is to remain publicly accessible, perhaps there can be an arrangement with the Park Board for a waiver of dedication fees; such an arrangement would require a long term easement.
 - h. Greg is hoping to begin construction this spring. He is requesting a letter of support, as they are just starting the entitlement process with the City.

- i. *Checklist review by the Committee afterward:* great concept; bike features will add to neighborhood connectivity; great score for much-needed public spaces in the neighborhood; the proposed lighting will enhance public safety; the design, with hand-laid bricks, is tied into local aesthetics; the landscaping plan maximizes greening and presents an ecofriendly orientation.
 - j. **A motion is made by Alice, seconded by Jerri, and unanimously approved by the Committee to provide a letter of support for the project.**
7. Site Plans at Intersection of Plymouth Avenue and West River Parkway – Opus + ESG
- a. Opus has already developed two well-known projects in the neighborhood, VELO and Variant.
 - b. The site contains 2.5 acres just north of the Star Tribune plant. Opus was selected through an RFP process and hopes to be under purchase agreement by the end of the week.
 - c. 8th Avenue right of way is owned currently by the Star Tribune. The site is very contaminated; a couple feet of the contaminated fill has been capped, but preliminary borings revealed that there is about 25-30 feet of garbage on site. There is no TIF money in the project, but there are grants for environmental remediation and contamination cleanup.
 - d. The border trees will remain, but due to contamination and the new structure, the interior trees will be removed. The building, however, will be justified as far south toward the existing plant, so as to keep as much open space near the parkway.
 - e. The site will feature a new dedicated pedestrian and bike connection from 8th Avenue to the parkway; there will also be a striped pedestrian crossing across the parkway, but there will be no vehicular connection from 8th to the parkway. There will be new sidewalks around the entire perimeter of the site. The idea is to extend the park to the site and to purposefully promote this green area as public space (which is also a component of the North Loop master service plan). Mark mentions that the park board dedication fee arrangement may be possible here, too, as the amenities across the parkway could use some TLC. There will be a low rod iron fence for some visual separation close to the building – but because the pool is inside, any fence there will not have to be 6 feet tall. There will also be significant improvements made from 1st Street down 8th Avenue, as that will be the way many people access the property and there will be more pedestrian and bicycle traffic there because of the new connections to the parkway.
 - f. All ground level units are walkouts, which breaks down the scale of the structure and is intended to add to neighborhood safety. There will be both low lights and some above lights so that the area is well-lit. Opus certainly doesn't want 8th or the new private drive to feel like an alley; rather they will be heavily greened and well-lit.
 - g. The three-winged, six-story building will feature a total of 200-225 rental units. The first floor is a podium, topped with five floors of wood framing. The three wings are not intended to look like warehouses, but will be compatible with design in the neighborhood. The façade of each of the three wings will be treated

differently; the first will be brick and glass, with the top floor set back; there will be cast stone on the second wing; and the third is a combination of brick, stone, and glass. There will be approximately 12 parallel parking spots for guest and visitors along the new private drive and there will be 275 stalls of below grade parking. There is the potential to contract some of those stalls to other buildings nearby.

- h. The Committee voices its concern over significant traffic on Plymouth Avenue during rush hour, as it is from Plymouth Avenue that vehicles will be able to turn down the private drive and access the underground parking; it also expresses the desire for a North Loop welcome sign on the corner near Plymouth. Opus is amenable to such a feature.
- i. The site is zoned as R6; a very small strip along the southern border of the site is zoned industrial and will need to be rezoned; there are no variances required for any setbacks. Civil engineers were recently engaged and will be exploring options for storm water management. The new private road will offer opportunities for impervious surface reduction.
- j. There is potential for a coffee shop in the building's lobby, but Opus doesn't want to compete with the coffee shop in the nearby Itasca building.
- k. Opus is requesting a letter of support for the project. The Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on December 7, 2017; Opus hopes to have shovels in the ground by May or June of 2018. Opus will also need to present to the Land Use Commission and to the Heritage Preservation Commission because of the project's location in the historic district.
- l. *Checklist review by the Committee afterward:* the project is a dense development, but unfortunately, not mixed-use; there are good attempts made at connectivity with the existing grid and the surroundings; pedestrian connections via sidewalks will be beneficial; efforts to address public safety are being made; traffic impacts and congestion are concerning; the design is compatible with historic surroundings (but only if real stone and hand-laid bricks are used); there are good efforts to maximize greening with larger trees and by landscaping the Star Tribune wall; the ecofriendly designs are somewhat hard to determine; the design is "unimpressive;" there is a strong desire for condos, as opposed to apartments; with so few sites remaining for development, this entry point to the neighborhood is a huge opportunity for a signature development. Francesco mentions that apartment complexes are often designed so as to allow them to be easily converted to condos later down the road, once condo development becomes less litigious.
- m. **A motion is made by Alice, seconded by Francesco, and unanimously approved by the Committee to provide a letter of concern, as opposed to one of support, outlining the project as a missed opportunity as currently presented.**

8. Committee Business

- a. No December meeting will be held.

9. Neighbor Comments

- a. There are no neighbor comments.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 17, 2017.

Adjourned at 7:14 P.M.