



March 25, 2020

Alexa Golemo – Executive Director

Macalester-Groveland Community Council
320 South Griggs Street
St. Paul, MN 55105

Subject: 1769 Grand Ave – HLU & Community Responses as of 03/24/2020

Dear Alexa, HLU Committee Members, and members of the Mac-Groveland Community,

The design team, my partner, and I appreciate your thoughtful responses thus far. We will incorporate your views as we finalize the designs and make our application to the City. There were a few common themes within your responses. I have distilled those reactions into questions and answered them below. If you wish to follow up, my partner and I will make ourselves available to continue the conversation until we reconvene at the April HLU meeting.

- **Q: How did you arrive at the unit mix of 3- and 4-bedroom units?**
 - A: There are few three- and four-bedroom units for rent in Macalester-Groveland. The Subject's block is occupied by primarily studio and 1-bedroom units. This development aims to provide a new housing choice that is not found on Grand Avenue (multi-level units) and is an alternative to single-family home ownership
- **Q: What renters are being targeted?**
 - A: The development does not exclusively target any demographic—anyone is free to apply. The units are designed to resemble a typical single-family house's floorplan, which is adaptable for a wide range of tenancies. Mac-Groveland is home to young professionals, families, and empty nesters, among others. The floorplans are designed to suit any/all of these populations
- **Q: What are the proposed rental costs of these units?**
 - A: The proposed per unit rents will range between \$2,550 to \$3,400 per month depending on the unit type. These rent levels are affordable to those making 100% of the area median income, according to HUD, and are comparable to the total cost of single-family home ownership especially considering that a down payment is not required to rent. Furthermore, the rent levels should be attractive when compared to newly-built apartments in the area
- **Q: Why are variances necessary? i.e. what does the zoning require, and why isn't that appropriate for this site?**
 - **Current RM2 Zoning:**
 - **Density** – A: RM2 Zoning requires 1,500 SF of lot per residential unit. The parcel is 9,995 SF, which would limit this site to six units. A six-unit property is not compatible with the adjacent multifamily uses and is not aligned with the goals outlined in the 2030 & 2040 Comp Plans promoting land-efficient housing and housing production on mixed-use corridors adjacent to neighborhood nodes. Therefore, the Proposal seeks a variance to build 12 units and match the existing density, while advancing the City and Community's long-term goals
 - **Side yard setback** – A: RM2 allows for a minimum side yard setback of 9' feet from either property line. All of the established side yards of residential structures on the Subject's block

are less than 9' (non-conforming), including the Subject as currently improved. The Proposal seeks to establish two 6' side yards on either side of the proposed structure in order to reflect the existing streetscape, provide an aesthetically pleasing product, and avoid disorderly development

- **Parking** – A: Under the existing zoning code, approximately 22 parking stalls would be required. The site is not capable of parking 22 cars as proposed, so the Subject seeks a parking reduction to a ratio of 1- parking stall per 1-unit for a total of 12 total parking spots. The Project's advantage is its location adjacent to numerous neighborhood amenities, good/service providers, job centers, public transit stops, and institutions of higher-education. It is believed that all daily activities can be accomplished via walking, biking, and/or public transportation. The hope is that this development can provide density to support increased public transit options in accordance with Community's Plan and Comp Plan's goals to promote non-car mobility modes of transportation
 - **Height** – A: RM2 Zoning allows for 50' of building height, so a height variance is not needed nor requested
- **Q: Can the developer commit to solar panels?**
 - A: Yes - Solar panels will be included in the application submitted to the City
 - **Q: Can the parking lot be reconfigured to increase the amount of greenspace?**
 - A: Greenspace can be increased only if the current parking load is further reduced. The City of St. Paul requires minimum drive aisles of 20' and stall depth of 18'. The lot is only 50' wide, so the current site plan is the most efficient layout for space provided
 - **Q: What condition is the existing house, and is it salvageable?**
 - A: The existing building improvements are in poor condition. The 2nd/3rd floor unit was destroyed by the last tenant and is uninhabitable. The exterior requires significant masonry and structural work. Unfortunately, the required repairs are not feasible and neither is relocating the building
 - **Q: Will the trees and hedges be permanently removed from the site?**
 - A: The trees will be permanently removed from the site. They are believed to be in poor health. Hopefully the hedges can be transplanted, but it cannot be guaranteed

Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Thanks so much,


Lucas Wiborg

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