

PPA Land Use Meeting held Thursday, July 8, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom

In attendance:

Aloida Zaragoza, Eric Amel, Jeff Barnhart, Devan Blanchard, Samuel Brissett, Gretchen Camp (ESG), Burt Coffin, Ned Dodington (ESG), Mike Duggan, David Frank, Robin Garwood, Dick Gilyard, Cam Gordon, Jordan Howe, Alyssa Jagdfeld, Carol Lansing, Susan Larson-Fleming, Gayla Lindt, Florence Littman, Brooke Magrid-Hart, Vera Marshall, Karen Murdock, Kate Needleman, Patrick O'Shaughnessy, Christine Pecard (ESG), Jere Purple, Ruth (last name?), Donna Schneider, Jane Stockman, Gary Wallace (ESG), John Wicks

The meeting was called to order at 7 PM. The minutes of the June meeting were accepted with no changes.

Gary Wallace gave a presentation on a large student housing project which is proposed for the corner of University Avenue and 27th Avenue, the current site of the Profile Event Center.

Greystar is a real estate company headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina. It was founded in 1993 in Houston, Texas. It has 63 offices worldwide. Greystar is the largest manager of rental housing in the United States, with 713,000 units. ESG is in partnership with Greystar in their projects in Chicago and the Twin Cities. Those projects include Elan in Uptown (2015), Elan West End at 394 and Route 100, and The Lakes in Minneapolis (2016). The Bower is an 18-story building under construction in Edina. All these projects are aimed at the upscale market.

Greystar has also built and managed student housing near several major universities. These projects have been aimed at the high end of the student market.

Greystar would like to build an upscale student housing development at 2630 University Avenue. The project would break ground in October 2022 and be completed in 30 months. Students would move in during June and July of 2025. Gary said this schedule was important because "you can't deliver student housing late." Students have to sign leases before the school year begins. So the Greystar-ESG team will be pushing to maintain the schedule. They are under contract to purchase the land in October 2022 and begin construction immediately.

Karen M. wondered if there was a market for such a high end student development. She said many students "just want to keep a roof over their heads" and are not seeking pricey amenities. Gary said they had done market research and were confident that "there are students for every price point." Greystar is familiar with the area around the U of M since they manage The Hub at Harvard and Washington and The Marshall.

Florence said she sees signs on rental properties all around the U offering incentives such as a free month's rent and free Wi-Fi to attract students. She felt there were a lot of vacancies. Gary said that occupancy is always much lower in the summertime but that during the school year occupancy of student housing was 97 percent.

Brooke wondered if the "saturation point" of student rental space near the U of M had been reached. Ned said that, after all the on-campus housing had been taken into account, there was still a demand for 25,000 to 30,000 beds for students near the U.

Gary said that Greystar would prefer not to put in retail on street level, though that was traditionally mandated by local municipalities. Several members of the Land Use Committee mentioned empty storefronts to be found in local apartment buildings near the U of M. Gary said that Greystar would probably seek to find a restaurant which would appeal to students.

The exterior of the building would be precast concrete and metal panels. The site is 1.4 acres in size. The project would have 680 units, 1040 beds, up to 350 parking spaces, and parking for 1040 bicycles. Eight percent of the units would be "affordable" (this is a city requirement).

Alyssa showed architectural drawings of the planned project. She said Greystar and ESG wanted to create something that was “unique, vibrant and diverse.”

The height of the building would be 18 stories (200 feet). The parcel is zoned “Transit 30,” which means that the required minimum height is 10 stories. The ground level is at 841 feet above sea level.

David asked if this project would block the view of downtown from Tower Hill. Alyssa showed a slide which showed that the downtown would still be visible. The new 18-story building would only block the view of part of Stadium Village and Dinkytown.

Sidewalks on 27th and Delaware would be widened to 8 feet. The building would provide “maker space” on street level for residents. The entrance to the underground parking would be off of Delaware Street.

Karen wondered why the open courtyard, including the swimming pool, was facing west toward U Flats rather than east onto 27th Avenue, which would provide more liveliness to the neighborhood. Gretchen said the noise might be detrimental to the neighborhood, since several single-family houses and the Glendale townhomes are right across the street. Gary said the west-facing courtyard would get more sunlight than one which faced east.

Dick Gilyard said he hoped the project would hook up to the “district energy” located north of University Avenue utilizing its storm water management system.

Gayla, citing a book entitled *The Color of Law*, said she hoped that Greystar would make a particular effort to attract BIPOC students to live in the new project. She said that housing discrimination against people of color has “been in place for generations.” Ned said that Greystar will operate the project after it is completed and they do hope to be inclusive.

John Wicks asked for volunteers to serve on a task force to review this project. Volunteers are Eric Amel, Dick Gilyard, Karen Murdock, Jane Stockman, and John Wicks.

NEXT TOPIC: Patrick O’Shaughnessy reported on the distillery planned for 620 Malcolm, adjacent to Surly and SKB. The opening will be August 2. He said that container carrying trucks often park along Malcolm Avenue. Ag Commodities Transload (website: agcomtrans.com) currently located at 530 25th Ave SE (corner of 25th Ave SE and U of M Transitway) plans to buy the land now owned by Midwest Climbing, LLC., located at 518 Malcolm Ave SE. This company ships agricultural commodities in containers. Patrick felt that this would bring “massive congestion” to Malcolm Avenue. Eric Amel agreed that the trucks on Malcolm are “a nuisance” right now and the problem would only get worse if a shipping company were to move in. Robin said that Cam’s office is getting lots of complaints about Ag Commodities Transload where they are operating now (primarily complaints about noise and dust). Robin said that the property is zoned industrial but the city could make things difficult for Ag Commodities Transload to move to Malcolm.

Kate asked how this issue would affect apartment buildings planned for near Malcolm Yards. Patrick said that John Wall plans to put up two apartment buildings and does not want more truck traffic on the street.

Dick G. said the Food Hall is only waiting for a certificate of occupancy from the city. It will open soon.

Susan L-F said that property owners along Bedford Street (first block south of University) have been repeatedly contacted about selling their properties. The zoning on that block is R-4.

Next meeting will be Thursday, September 9th at 7:00 PM. It will be a Zoom Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM. Revised Document Issued: 9-10-2021