

**Minnetonka Planning Commission  
Minutes**

**March 17, 2022**

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Sewall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Commissioners Henry, Maxwell, Powers and Sewall were present. Waterman, Banks and Hanson were absent.

Staff members present: City Planner Loren Gordon and Assistant City Planner Susan Thomas.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

*Maxwell moved, second by Powers, to approve the agenda as submitted with postponement of the review of Items 8A, 8B, 10A and 11A to the April 7, 2022 planning commission meeting and additional comments for item 8C as provided in the change memo dated March 17, 2022.*

*Henry, Maxwell, Powers and Sewall voted yes. Waterman, Banks and Hanson were absent. Motion carried.*

**4. Approval of Minutes: March 3, 2022**

*Powers moved, second by Maxwell, to approve the March 3, 2022 meeting minutes as submitted.*

*Henry, Maxwell, Powers and Sewall voted yes. Waterman, Banks and Hanson were absent. Motion carried.*

**5. Report from Staff**

Gordon and Chair Sewall thanked Henry for attending the meeting virtually from Belgium.

**6. Report from Planning Commission Members: None**

**7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda: None**

**8. Public Hearings**

**A. Resolution approving final building plans and a sign plan amendment for Planet Fitness at 12437 Wayzata Blvd.**

Review of this item was postponed until the April 7, 2022 planning commission meeting.

**B. Resolution denying variances to increase building height and floor area ratio requirements for a new house at 4299 Annika Court.**

Review of this item was postponed until the April 7, 2022 planning commission meeting.

**C. Items concerning Abdo Market House, a multi-family residential development, at 14317 Excelsior Blvd.**

Chair Sewall introduced the proposal and called for the staff report.

Gordon and Thomas reported. Staff recommended approval of the application based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Dean Dovolis, DJR Architecture, representing the applicant, stated that:

- Gordon and Thomas gave a great, complete presentation.
- He provided renderings that show how the building would look on the site compared to the surrounding buildings.
- There would be 36 units.
- The majority of parking would be underground to preserve the green space. There would be guest parking spots on the east side of the building.
- He explained the traffic pattern.
- He thanked everyone for their time.
- He was available for questions.

Henry asked if adding more visual interest to the roof had been considered. Mr. Dovolis answered that the roof was chosen to be flat since the neighbors do not want a tall building. A gable would increase the height of the building. A lot of buildings are doing flat roofs to make them solar ready. There is a better solar efficiency with flat roofs.

Henry thought the roof would appear large on the east side. Mr. Dovolis stated that compacting the building and parking was done to preserve as much of the green area on the site as possible. A portion of the building could have been three stories if more of the site would be covered.

In response to Henry's question, Mr. Dovolis stated that the exterior building color is cream. Lighter colors tend to create a less heavy building. The pallet would be creams and beiges to be lighter, reflective and have an appearance of being more in scale with the surrounding buildings. Deep or bright colors would make the building appear larger in scale.

Powers asked if the garage would include electric-vehicle-charging stations. Mr. Dovolis answered affirmatively. There would be 10 to start. The infrastructure would be wired to

accommodate future electric-charging vehicle needs. There would be bike storage areas and car washes. There would be a balanced mix of one-bedroom, two-bedroom and two-bedroom-plus-den units. The affordable units would be made up of a proportionate mix.

Chair Sewall asked if there would be outdoor amenities. Mr. Dovolis answered affirmatively. The garage could be moved a little to the left or right. The idea is to create one space that would be drop-off only to accommodate a semi-truck and trailer. The short-term parking area would provide room for stacking.

In response to Powers' question, Mr. Dovolis stated that the applicant constructed a building using similar exterior colors at West 51<sup>st</sup> Street and Ewing Avenue in Minneapolis.

The public hearing was opened.

Mike Curran, 14319 Stewart Lane, stated that:

- He likes the sidewalk around the building. It is an improvement to the plan.
- Short-term delivery trucks currently idle in the street instead of pulling into the parking lot at The Oaks.
- There are pedestrians in the area.
- The current generator stored outside in the front yard is noisy when tested. If there is one, he would like it stored indoors.
- He was not sure how the proposal would impact the Gold Nugget's deck.

No additional testimony was submitted and the hearing was closed.

Mr. Dovolis stated that a generator would be screened and located in the northwest corner. It would be tested once a month.

Henry said that:

- Many of his concerns have been addressed since the review of the concept plan.
- He would prefer a commitment to utilizing solar panels.
- The proposal would be appropriate for the site.
- He would prefer a little more differentiation to the outside appearance.
- Trees in front would help the building blend in.
- He generally supports the proposal.

Powers stated that:

- He visited the site. The street looks narrow, but it is not.

- He likes 36 units. The density is appropriate.
- The PUD is definitely appropriate.
- The site design is very reasonable. It is about as smart a design as can be accomplished on the site while respecting the neighbors.
- He is completely in favor of the proposal.
- He will visit the building at West 51<sup>st</sup> Street and Ewing Avenue to get a better sense of the exterior color.

Maxwell stated that:

- She agreed with Powers. The density is appropriate.
- She appreciated the renderings of the aerial views and floor by floor descriptions compared to the neighboring buildings. That makes it easy for her to say that the height and density would be appropriate.
- She agreed that a PUD would be appropriate in exchange for the public good provided by the units of affordable housing.
- The site and building design are fine. She appreciates the underground parking rather than surface parking. There might be a bit of work to determine delivery and truck parking areas, but that could be worked out with a schedule.
- She supports the proposal.

Chair Sewall stated that:

- The proposal prioritizes preservation of trees over the feel of density. He would like three stories better, but, in this scenario, it makes sense to save the trees and fantastic green space.
- The proposal would improve pedestrian safety on Steward Lane by adding sidewalks up to Excelsior Blvd. That is almost a PUD-worthy public benefit as well as the affordable housing.
- He was totally indifferent on the outside color of the building.
- This is definitely the best proposal he has seen for the site.
- This proposal makes sense and he supports it.

***Powers moved, second by Maxwell, to recommend that the city council adopt the following in regard to Abdo Market House multi-family-residential development at 14317 Excelsior Blvd.:***

- ***An ordinance rezoning the property from R-1, low-density residential, to PUD, planned unit development, and adopting a master development plan.***
- ***A resolution approving vacation of a right-of-way easement.***
- ***A resolution approving preliminary and final plats.***
- ***A resolution approving final site and building plans.***

*Henry, Maxwell, Powers and Sewall voted yes. Waterman, Banks and Hanson were absent. Motion carried.*

**9. Other Business**

**A. Concept plan for Buhl Investors at 10900 Red Circle Drive.**

Gordon reported. Staff recommends commissioners provide feedback on the key topics identified by staff and any other land-use-related items that commissioners deem appropriate. This discussion is intended to assist the applicant in the preparation of more detailed development plans.

Pete Deanovic, Buhl Investors, applicant, stated that:

- The building is functionally obsolete. The proposal would create a second-floor terrace experience that works for today's environment.
- The area has tremendous retail and is next to the future SWLRT station.
- The proposal would expand the trails to connect to the north through Red Circle and back up to the retail.
- There would be 220 units and 310 parking stalls.
- He was looking forward to receiving feedback.
- He provided renderings of the elevations with surrounding buildings.
- The project would minimize the impact to residents by preserving the 1970s vintage building.

Henry likes the repurposing of the structure that blends into the contours of the land. He suggested adding solar panels to the roof and increasing the size of the rooftop patio areas.

Mr. Deanovic explained that building code restricts the size of the rooftop patios unless there would be two points of egress. He has been meeting with tenants who have different ideas for outdoor patios. Utilizing solar panels is a good suggestion that will be looked into incorporating into the project. The building has a fairly efficient heat-pump system that has an energy-recovery system. Those would be redone and improve the existing efficiency.

Powers was not sure an apartment building would fit next to a commercial site and across the street from a church. Mr. Deanovic explained that Buhl Investors developed the Home2 site in Edina at West 50<sup>th</sup> Street and France Ave. and an apartment building there. He has found that proximity to compelling retail, good schools and public transportation are the wave of the future. Opus is an amazing area because it has an established trail system, access to Lone Lake, amazing restaurants that are within walking distance and proximity to the SWLRT. These uses are complimentary. He views it as a positive and a great location for this type of use.

Maxwell asked how the parking needs of the business portion would be met. Mr. Deanovic answered that office uses today have decreased their need for parking due to teleworking. The lowest level of the building is currently used by an industrial use. A reduction in parking stalls would also occur with the completion of the SWLRT. Under this proposal, more efficient parking would be created on the existing impervious surface to allow a marketable number of parking stalls. The multi-family building would have 1.4 parking stalls per unit. He would like the ability to have the swing space and symbiotic relationship between the two properties.

In response to Maxwell's question, Mr. Deanovic explained the traffic pattern. The road on the south would be a one-way street. A separate, dedicated entrance would be needed for the second floor. Maxwell suggested arrows be added to the plan to show the traffic pattern and entrances.

Chair Sewall asked where moving vans would access the residential building. Mr. Deanovic answered that a moving van would travel down Red Circle Drive, unload where the drive aisle is shown in a diagonal fashion and enter the lobby. There is an existing loading dock there.

Chair Sewall invited anyone present to speak. No one spoke.

Powers stated that:

- He was not as concerned with preserving the existing building.
- He was a little confused by the inclusion of a multi-family residential building.
- The site seems a little tight for fire trucks and parking with trailers.
- The project looks interesting. He is interested to know more.

Maxwell stated that:

- She likes keeping the current use of the office space and the way it would be terraced into the existing topography. That could be a very exciting space. She was fine with the access to the second floor.
- Parking could be figured out with an application.
- Multi-family housing is a reasonable use for the site. She will be checking with staff if more housing is needed near the SWLRT and the number of housing units already being constructed in the area.
- She appreciated the trail connectivity. She works in the Opus area and loves the green space and ability to run on the trails.

Henry stated that:

- He supports repurposing of the structure.
- He thought Opus is destined to be a destination on its own.

- He likes a mix of uses near each other.
- He would like to see more specifics on the proposed new building and the addition of more dimension to the exterior instead of a gray box for multi-family housing.

Chair Sewall stated that:

- A lot of effort went into repurposing the office building. That is great to see. He likes to see the repurposing of a building.
- Multi-family housing could work, but he has a lot of questions and needs more details.
- He had a feeling the shape of the building might change a little bit to accommodate traffic and delivery needs.
- He loves the plans for the office building.
- He knows that the city has not hit a saturation point for multi-family housing, but he would like to hear from staff regarding the Opus area.
- He likes the mix of uses.

Mr. Deanovic appreciated everyone's time. Chair Sewall wished him luck with the project.

**10. Elections**

Review of this item was postponed until the April 7, 2022 planning commission meeting.

**11. Planning Commission Bylaws and Policies**

Review of this item was postponed until the April 7, 2022 planning commission meeting.

**12. Adjournment**

***Henry moved, second by Powers, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.***

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lois T. Mason  
Planning Secretary