

**Minnnetonka Planning Commission
Minutes**

November 16, 2017

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Sewall, Calvert, Knight, O'Connell, Powers, Schack, and Kirk were present.

Staff members present: Community Development Director Julie Wischnack and City Planner Loren Gordon.

3. Approval of Agenda

Calvert moved, second by Knight to approve the agenda as submitted with the removal of item 8A, a sign plan review with a setback variance for gym, office, storage, and classroom additions at Clear Spring Elementary at 5701 County Road 101, which was postponed until the meeting on November 30, 2017.

Sewall, Calvert, Knight, O'Connell, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes: October 26, 2017

Calvert moved, second by Powers, to approve the October 26, 2017 meeting minutes as submitted.

Sewall, Calvert, Knight, O'Connell, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Motion carried.

5. Report from Staff

Gordon briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting of November 13, 2017:

- Adopted a resolution approving a conditional use permit for the Bright Eyes Clinic.

The sixth comprehensive guide plan steering committee meeting was held the evening prior. It focused on natural resources. The next meeting will be held December 11, 2017 and will focus on economic development.

The next planning commission meeting will be November 30, 2017.

6. Report from Planning Commission Members

Chair Kirk congratulated Calvert for being elected to the city council and noted that Knight will finish his term on the planning commission at the end of the year. He encouraged any resident interested in serving on the commission to apply.

Schack reported that staff did a great job presenting a lot of information at the comprehensive guide plan steering committee. She encouraged everyone to view the meeting on line.

Calvert enjoyed serving on the commission and encouraged others to apply.

Powers was impressed with how complete the staff reports were at the comprehensive guide plan steering committee meeting. Dietrich and Colleran did a great job presenting.

7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda

No item was removed from the consent agenda for discussion or separate action.

Schack moved, second by O'Connell, to approve the item listed on the consent agenda as recommended in the staff report as follows:

A. Side and rear yard setback variance for a vertical expansion of an accessory structure at 3841 Baker Road.

Adopt the resolution approving side and rear yard setback variances for a vertical accessory structure expansion at 3841 Baker Road.

Sewall, Calvert, Knight, O'Connell, Powers, Schack, and Kirk voted yes. Motion carried and the item on the consent agenda was approved as submitted.

8. Public Hearings

A. Site and building plan review with a setback variance for gymnasium, office, storage, and classroom additions at Clear Spring Elementary at 5701 County Road 101.

This item was postponed until the planning commission meeting on November 30, 2017.

9. Other Business

A. Concept plan review for Dominion at 11001 Bren Road East.

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

Gordon reported. He recommended that commissioners provide comments and feedback on the identified key issues and additional issues commissioners deem appropriate. The discussion is intended to assist the applicant with future direction that may lead to the preparation of more detailed development plans.

Gordon stated that the income limit for a tenant residing in affordable housing would be in the middle \$50,000 range. The rent would be estimated at \$800 to \$1,200 depending on the type of unit. The average rental rate for an apartment in Minnetonka is about \$1,300. The applicant would apply for tax credits.

Chair Kirk asked how easily a pedestrian could walk from Opus to other locations. Gordon pointed out existing trails. There is a gap now that would be addressed during future redevelopment. Wischnack stated that there is an Opus walkability study that details every connection and makes suggestions for improvements that are included in the capital improvement plan for the city. Most of the trails pass under the roads in Opus.

Ryan Lunderby, applicant, stated that he appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback and answer questions. He introduced Mike Rich, architect for the project. Mr. Lunderby stated that:

- Dominion properties is building a lot of new construction similar to the proposal around the metropolitan area. Dominion is a long-term owner. Decisions are made for the long term. Quality finishes would be used.
- Regardless of a property's ability to fund capital improvements, Dominion reinvests in its properties.
- The site is a great opportunity to add affordable housing.
- Costs will continue to rise, especially with the completion of the lite rail. The market is favorable right now to build affordable housing.

- The proposal would be for a 256-unit senior community with independent living and 198 units of affordable, work-force housing.

Mike Rich introduced Brady Halvorson, a landscape architect, and George Johnson, who assisted with the plans. Mr. Rich stated that:

- The wooded areas, trail system, future Opus station, and townhouse development are important elements of the site.
- There is a 30-foot grade change.
- He reviewed the site plan.
- The drive would link the three buildings.
- A second entrance and exit is being considered for the site.
- The site would be fully accessible to transit.
- Pavers may be used to customize the trails as preferable locations for walking paths would be identified.
- The senior building would be six stories. It would be positioned so that it would not create shadows on its neighbors. There would be a drop-off area. There would be underground parking beneath the footprint of the building. The underground parking area would connect with the family-housing building.
- The trail would be enhanced with landscaping and look more like a linear park.
- There would be separate tot lots and play areas outside and inside the building.
- The senior building would have amenity areas, an on-site trail system, and a tot lot.
- A dog run is being considered.
- The building would be shifted back to break up the elevations.
- Dense landscaping would be planted to provide a buffer to neighbors.
- An outdoor pool is being considered for a common area.
- Public art may be incorporated at the entrance.
- The first floor of family housing would be walk-outs with individual patios that connect to paths.
- He provided photos of a similar facility in Minneapolis.
- The buildings would have colors and material to match its natural surroundings. Stone, brick, and wood would be used in earth tones.
- A very pedestrian-friendly environment would be created.
- There would be a series of retaining walls to create a living environment, maintain the urban forest, and provide a buffer to the neighbors on the west.

- A substantial amount of parking would be located below grade.
- Each building would have its own set of amenities.
- He would appreciate comments and feedback.

Powers asked if incorporating services like a hair salon had been considered for the senior building. Mr. Lunderby answered affirmatively. He stated that salon space would be available to providers that would use the space for free and coordinate their times with the residents. Additional amenities would be large gathering rooms with kitchens, card and craft rooms, a movie theater, and a fitness room. Local groups could provide exercise classes. Residents would not be charged for exercise classes. Dominion has purchased a shuttle bus that takes seniors to different services and events on a set schedule or as needed.

Schack asked what prompted the change in design of the senior building from a horseshoe shape to a straight building with an additional story. Mr. Rich explained that the proposed building would provide the ideal unit-type mix and the sizes of the units were increased. The previous configuration had a wing closer to the street. The entrance would have been on the side which would have caused conflicts. The current proposal would allow direct access to underground parking and eliminate the need to drive through the site. It would also provide an adequate number of parking stalls for each unit underground. The first shape conflicted with the location of the wetland.

Mr. Rich clarified that there was a concept plan that included two underground parking levels and five residential floors. The current concept plan has one underground parking level and six residential floors.

Schack thought the elevation illustration was very helpful. In response to her question, Mr. Rich stated that it would be possible for townhome residents to see over the four-story building roof and see the six-story building in the distance. There are existing trees that would remain on the site and additional trees would be added to create a buffer and block the view.

Powers thought this was the most comprehensive concept plan he has ever seen. He loved how the project team considered so many angles. The concept plan would create an ownership feel for the village. Residents would regret ever having to leave.

Mr. Lunderby agreed. Residents could age and continue to raise their families without having to move. The management staff would live at the property. The design pays attention to running and maintaining the buildings.

Calvert found the materials attractive. She liked the color scheme, rhythmic sense of the design, and broken-up mass. She encouraged the use of public art. Her grandparents lived in the same one-bedroom apartment their entire married life. She liked the buffer, preservation of trees, and additional landscaping. Preserving as many natural features as possible would make the proposal a more appealing place to live. She liked the village-center concept with communal spaces.

In response to Chair Kirk's question, Mr. Lunderby stated that the demand for affordable housing is so great that his company cannot build enough of it. The proposal would fill a void and create a mix of housing types in the neighborhood.

Chair Kirk liked the number of amenities in the proposal. He suggested that pictures of examples of the amenities be provided.

Chair Kirk asked how much the proposal would depend on the SWLRT being completed. Mr. Lunderby said that the SWLRT would benefit the proposal, but it would move forward without the SWLRT.

Chair Kirk encouraged connecting the trail that would travel south.

In response to Chair Kirk's question, Mr. Lunderby stated that the amount of parking was determined by studies conducted at similar facilities and would equal 1.5 stalls to 1 general-occupancy unit and 1.2 stalls to 1 senior unit.

In response to Chair Kirk's question, Mr. Lunderby stated that the possibility of decreasing the number of units is limited by the fixed-land price, rent caps, and investors' comfort levels. Chair Kirk noted that the amenities package is contingent on the number of units.

Mr. Lunderby stated that The Bluffs at Nine Mile Creek in Eden Prairie has density similar to the proposed concept plan.

Calvert asked if the building could be used for residents of other ages in 20 years. Mr. Lunderby answered in the affirmative. The minimum compliance period for affordable housing is 15 years. The rent differential is \$400 to \$600 a month from affordable units to market-rate units. There are not many independent-living, high-quality developments for seniors in the city. Retail businesses and services would follow the completion of the proposal. This is the logical, front-end use of redevelopment coming to the area.

Wischnack provided that Minnetonka has 2,900 units of senior, age-restricted units and 24,000 households. Of the 2,900 senior units, 700 are cooperatives

and condominiums and 2,200 are rental. The vacancy rates indicate quite a demand.

Chair Kirk invited those present to comment. No one responded.

Chair Kirk would prefer a second street access.

Schack liked how the proposal would provide a transition to the SWLRT. Keeping the area open and fluid is an important concept. A change in visual impact would slow traffic down and make the area more pedestrian safe. She previously lived in Opus and really liked it. It is a unique area. The proposal would be a great opportunity. The trail system would be really cool. It would provide an “uptown alternative” and an opportunity to enjoy the nature in the area.

Calvert encouraged pedestrian safety be taken into account near the SWLRT station. Connecting the trails would be important to improve walkability of the area.

Powers would like the site to have a distinct feel of being in Minnetonka from a pedestrian’s view and from an aerial view. He encouraged the applicant to provide information regarding the energy conservation component of the proposal.

Sewall agreed with providing as many pedestrian safety measures as possible. He encouraged buffering, especially to the neighbors on the southwest. He recognized the big need for affordable housing and he was comfortable with an entire building of affordable housing, but thought there would be benefits of spreading it out throughout the city. He was excited for the area to be developed.

O’Connell supports the concept plan. The density does not scare him. The area already has market-rate units and more will be added as the area continues to be developed. He recommended the applicant be prepared to address traffic concerns. The area already has traffic issues. He liked the design. The applicant has a great reputation. There is a demand for this product on the investors’ side.

Knight agreed with O’Connell. He works south of Opus. There are a lot of employees at his workplace that would benefit from this proposal by reducing their commute. He likes the proposal. The Opus area is the perfect location for the proposed density. He likes the looks of the building. He cycles to work on the street, so he would oppose reducing the number of lanes on Bren Road.

Chair Kirk summarized his understanding that commissioners found the change in land use and affordable housing component appropriate and that buffering and walkability are important priorities. The look of the building is agreeable.

Chair Kirk liked how the SWLRT and new development in the area could provide an urban vibe that could become part of Minnetonka.

Chair Kirk noted that the city council is tentatively scheduled to review the concept plan on December 4, 2017. He looked forward to an application for the project being submitted in the future.

10. Adjournment

***Schack moved, second by Knight, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously.***

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary