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# Walker Library Redevelopment Study

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## ■ Project Objective

The Walker Library is located in the trendy Uptown neighborhood of Minneapolis on the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Lagoon Avenue. A combination of commercial, retail and residential areas and the presence of a major transit hub make the Uptown area a desirable place to live and work.

The goal of this report is to determine the feasibility of redeveloping the Walker Library site as a mixed-use facility with underground parking, a new library on the first floor, and residential units located above the library.

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## ■ Site/Code Analysis

### Zoning

The site is zoned OR2 – High Density Office Residence, and is within a Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District. Within OR2, the library would be a permitted use, and multiple-family dwelling having more than five units would be a conditional use.

### Lot Dimensions

The library has a permitted minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet. Its height is limited to a maximum of four stories not exceeding 56 feet. As part of a mixed-use building, dwelling areas are also limited to four stories and may not exceed 56 feet in height.

The lot is rectangular in shape, and measures approximately 167 feet along Hennepin Avenue, and 122 feet along Lagoon Avenue. To the west of the lot between the existing parking lot and the adjacent apartments, is a 12-foot wide abandoned alley. The City is able to acquire six feet of this abandoned alley, providing 128 feet along Lagoon Ave.

The total lot area is 21,376 SF (128 feet x 167 feet). This includes the additional six feet from the abandoned alley.

### Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The Floor Area Ratio determines the total building square footage. The Walker Library site dimensions are approximately 128 x 167 feet, for a total site area of 21,376 square feet. The

proposed mixed-use development has an FAR of 2.5. The maximum allowable gross floor area is:  $21,376 \text{ square feet} \times 2.5 = 53,440 \text{ square feet}$ .

A density bonus within the zoning code allows a 20% FAR increase if all parking is within the building or below grade. This proposed development meets this requirement. The maximum allowable gross floor area plus a 20% density bonus is calculated as follows:  $53,440 \text{ square feet} \times 0.20 = 10,688 \text{ square feet}$ ; then  $53,440 \text{ SF} + 10,688 \text{ SF} = 64,128 \text{ square feet}$  allowed after the bonus.

## Setbacks

Along Hennepin and Lagoon Avenues, the setback is 15 feet from the property line. To the west and north along The Mall, the setback is nine feet from the property line.

Based on a review of the 1979 architectural construction drawings, we determined the library was originally built on the property line. This allowed a 15-foot-wide sidewalk along Hennepin and an eight-foot-wide sidewalk along Lagoon. Rebuilding according to the zoning requirements would require the additional setbacks mentioned above, which would create 30 feet for the public realm along Hennepin and 23 feet for the public realm along Lagoon, and leave a maximum buildable area of 14,872 square feet.

According to the City's zoning office, the below-ground parking would not have to meet the setback requirements. The below-ground parking could be built on the property lines provided the structure is below grade.

## Impervious Surfaces

Impervious surfaces shall not cover more than 85% of the site.

## Travel Demand Management Plan

The Hennepin/Lake Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District requires that a Travel Demand Management Plan be prepared for the site prior to development.

## Dwelling Units

A mixed-used development is allowed one dwelling unit for every 700 square feet of lot area. This would result in a maximum of 30 units ( $128 \text{ feet} \times 167 \text{ feet} = 21,376 \text{ SF} \div 700 \text{ SF}$ ). The 20% density bonus for underground parking brings the maximum allowable dwelling units to 36 on the site.

## Parking Requirements

The zoning code requires one parking space for every 300 square feet in excess of 4,000 SF of library and one parking space per residential unit. At 14,872 square feet, the library would require 36 parking stalls. If the library was to have the desired area of 17,000 square feet, 43 parking stalls would be required.

It may be possible to get a 10% parking reduction because the site is within 300 feet of a transit stop. Providing bicycle parking can also lower the total number of parking spaces by one.

### ■ Applying the Zoning Code to the Walker Library Site

Applying the zoning code to the site defines the framework for the allowable size of the mixed-use facility. The analysis below defines the required spaces and identifies the space available for residential use.

As determined above, the site's maximum gross floor area is 64,128 square feet, and the first floor buildable area is 14,872 square feet. Assuming the library will use all of the allowable first floor buildable area, 49,256 square feet of floor area remains for residential units.

To determine the maximum number of allowable dwelling units, the total lot size of 21,376 square feet is divided by 700 square feet for each dwelling unit for a total of 30 dwelling units. This development is allowed a density bonus of 20 percent, because parking is provided within the building and below grade. This adds another 6 dwelling units for a total of 36 dwelling units.

A schematic design of a single level of subsurface parking yields approximately 43 spaces. The code requires a minimum of 36 parking spaces for the library (14,872 SF – 4,000 SF = 10,872 SF \ 300 SF per stall). This leaves seven spaces for the residential development.

Total FAR	64,128	SF
First Floor Library	-14,872	SF
FAR Remaining for Residential Development	49,256	SF
Total Dwelling Units allowed per zoning code	36	Dwelling Units
Total Dwelling Units allowed based on parking limitations	7	Dwelling Units

## Options to Consider

The required setbacks make the redevelopment of the Walker Library difficult, since the setbacks limit the library to 14,872 square feet, which is significantly less than the goal of 17,000 square feet. Eliminating the setbacks with a variance would allow a development that meets the library's square footage requirement.

When considering a variance to eliminate the building setbacks it is important to understand how the development would affect the character of the neighborhood. The other three corners of Hennepin and Lagoon are zoned Commercial and have buildings on the property lines. In addition, the Walker Library is built on the property line. Allowing this site to develop on the property would be consistent with the context of the area.

If we assume that the building setback requirements were waived, the Library would have available approximately 21,376 square feet at street level and each subsurface parking level would take up approximately 19,800 square feet with 43 parking stalls. Starting with our total gross floor area of 64,128 square feet and subtracting the 17,000 square foot library we are left with 47,128 square feet of floor area.

Parking codes require one stall per 300 square feet of library in excess of 4,000 square feet, so a 17,000 square foot library would need 43 parking stalls, which uses an entire level of subsurface parking. A second level of parking would be necessary for the residential development, and would provide 43 parking spaces. Since each dwelling unit is required to have one parking space, the parking restrictions would allow up to 43 dwelling units.

Total Gross Floor Area	64,128	SF
First Floor Library	-17,000	SF
Floor Area Remaining for Residential Development	47,128	SF
Total Dwelling Units allowed per zoning code	36	Dwelling Units
Total number of parking stalls available for residential development	43	Parking Stalls

A separated parking facility for the library and the residential development was requested in order to create a secure and available parking facility for the residential occupants. The above scenario could easily accommodate a secure parking facility by providing a card activated gate to the lower level of parking.

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## ■ Housing Market

Based on our knowledge of the demographics in the Calhoun Isles Community and the East Isles and ECCO Neighborhoods, we believe that the Walker Library site could serve several different markets. The site offers some very strong benefits that would be attractive to various buyer/renter segments. Among these benefits is excellent transit access, close proximity to a wide range of “lifestyle” retail stores, quick access to public open space amenities and a relatively short, direct commuting path to Downtown Minneapolis, where at least 160,000 jobs lie.

Market segments that would likely show interest in housing on this site include the following:

- **Young singles** (under age 30) that attends school, or work in Downtown, South Minneapolis or the nearby western suburbs. Uptown is perhaps the most exciting place in the Twin Cities to live for young singles, whether they desire to own or rent. Housing products targeted to these people include moderately-priced studio and one-bedroom apartments or possibly entry-price condo units. On the ownership front, young professional singles would be a key target market, but they are price sensitive, and affordability is key. Young unmarried/married couples (under age 30). This broader category includes same-sex couples, a small but growing submarket across the country. Again, the lifestyle benefits of Uptown for young people are virtually unmatched by any other area in the Twin Cities. Rental units or entry-priced condos would be suitable for this market.
- **Young unmarried/married couples** (under age 30). This broader category includes same-sex couples, a small but growing submarket across the country. Again, the lifestyle benefits of Uptown for young people are virtually unmatched by any other area in the Twin Cities. Rental units or entry-priced condos would be suitable for this market.
- **Working households** (of all ages, without children) with low and moderate incomes. Great transit access near employment centers would attract households who work, but earn modest wages. Working singles and couples across many age groups would consider affordable housing on this site, and likely demand mostly one-bedroom units, with some studio and two-bedroom units mixed in.
- **Single parents** (with one or two children) with low and moderate incomes. This household type relies on affordable rental housing and the transit characteristics of this site would be a selling point. As well, new affordable housing for families is typically in short demand throughout the Twin Cities, and any opportunity to add additional units should be strongly considered. Additionally, some of the public schools in this part of Minneapolis are in high demand, and this could be a

convenient location for a single parent who works in Downtown, and also desires his/her children to be in a school in South/Southwest Minneapolis. Finally, the prospect of having a library within the building could be attractive to a parent with school-age children.

With these things said, however, the Uptown area is not particularly child-friendly, with high traffic volumes and street noise from bar patrons well into the night, especially on weekends. If low- and moderate-income families were to be considered for this site, unit/building designs would have to be very sensitive to their needs. Small families demand two-bedroom units as well, which would reduce the overall unit count.

## ■ Preliminary Construction Cost Estimate

The following preliminary construction cost estimate is based on experience with similar projects and using industry averages from RS Means.

Task	Quantity		Unit Price	Cost
Site Demolition	1	LS	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
17,000 square foot library	17,000	SF	\$ 211.00*	\$ 3,587,000
One level of below grade parking for the library (43 stalls)	19,800	SF	\$ 65.00*	\$ 1,287,000
36 residential units at 1,000 square feet each	36,000	SF	\$ 120.00*	\$ 4,320,000
One level of below grade parking for the residential development (43 stalls)	19,800	SF	\$ 70.00*	\$ 1,386,000
<b>Total Construction Cost</b>				<b>\$ 10,780,000</b>

Assuming the demolition costs will be equally shared between the library and the residential development, construction costs are estimated at:

- \$4,974,000 for the library, and
- \$5,806,000 for the residential units.

\* Does not include soft costs such as engineering, architecture, permitting, legal fees, etc.