

**Department of Community Planning & Economic Development**

**Planning Division**

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**MEMORANDUM**

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DATE: November 15, 2012

TO: City Planning Commission and Heritage Preservation Commission – Joint Committee of the Whole Meeting

FROM: Janelle Widmeier – Senior City Planner

SUBJECT: Mill City Quarter

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The applicant and the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) would like to introduce and seek feedback from the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and City Planning Commission (CPC) on the new construction proposal at the property of 300 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South and 428 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South. This input will be used by the applicant as they prepare formal applications.

The Mill City Quarter project would include two phases. The first phase would consist of a new 6-story, mixed use building with ground floor retail and up to 140 dwelling units on the property of 300 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South (the west parcel). The second phase would be a residential building on the property of 428 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South (the east parcel). A property under separate ownership is located between the two parcels. The site is zoned C3A Community Activity Center District, DH Downtown Height Overlay District, MR Mississippi River Critical Area Overlay District and DP Downtown Parking Overlay District. It is also located in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

Materials provided by the applicant that are attached to this memo include an aerial photo, context photos, two site plan options, landscaping and open space concepts, and Phase I floor plans and renderings.

**SITE HISTORY**

A Minneapolis and St. Louis rail corridor was previously located on the site.

**LAND USE AND PRESERVATION GUIDANCE**

**Future Land Use:** *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* identifies mixed use as the appropriate future land use for this site. The site is located in the Mill District Activity Center and the Downtown Growth Center. It also falls within the boundaries of the *Update to the Historic Mills*

*District Master Plan*, where mixed use development with commercial at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South intersection and a plaza in the rail spur “swoop” area is called for on the subject site.

**St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines (SAF):** The guidelines can be found at <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-097595.pdf> (please note: this is a link to the final draft, which does not include amendments adopted into the document by the Heritage Preservation Commission). The site is located in the Water Power Character Area. Primarily Chapter 9 New Infill Building Guidelines of the plan applies to this proposal.

## **APPLICATIONS**

The following applications have been identified at this time for Phase I:

### **Heritage Preservation Commission:**

- Certificate of appropriateness.

### **City Planning Commission:**

- Variance to increase the maximum floor area of a retail use from 8,000 square feet to 15,000 square feet.
- Site plan review.

## **SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN REVIEW QUESTIONS**

CPED seeks the HPC and CPC feedback on the following questions/observations as well as other questions/observations the Commissions may have:

- Are the planting and paving plans of the woonerf shown on Site Plan—Option B compatible and reflective of the historic context of the Water Power character area? (SAF Requirements 6.2 and 6.7)
- Is the width of the pedestrian zone sufficient adjacent to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South? (Comprehensive plan policies 2.3 and 2.10)
- Is the massing of the building sufficiently divided into smaller identifiable sections? (SAF Requirements 9.11, 9.12, 9.13 and 10.9 and section 530.120(a) of the zoning code)
- Are the proposed exterior materials appropriate to the context? (SAF Requirements 9.20 and 9.21)

## **Above Referenced St. Anthony Falls Historic District Design Guidelines:**

### Landscape Design

- 6.2 Design new landscapes to be in harmony with the overall historic character of the district.
- A new landscape design should not impede one's ability to understand the historical function and character of the context.
  - A new landscape design should not convey a false sense of history. Designs that reflect their own time, while helping to convey the history of a site, are appropriate.
  - A new landscape design that helps interpret the history of a site is encouraged. This does not have to be a literal interpretation.

### Open Space & Parks

- 6.7 New designs for open spaces and parks should be compatible and reflective of the historic context of the individual character areas.
- Incorporate the remnants of historic infrastructure and buildings into new designs for open spaces and parks.
  - Retain the historic orientation and access patterns of sites.
  - Interpret the historic use of the site through new design elements.
  - The volunteer pattern of historic landscapes should be reflected in industrial settings.

### Building Mass, Scale and Height

- 9.11 Provide variation in building height in a large development.
- In order to reduce the perceived mass of a larger building, divide it into subordinate modules that reflect traditional building sizes in the context. Too much variation in building height is inappropriate.
  - Vary the height of building modules in a large structure, and include portions that are similar in height to historic structures in the context. However, avoid excessive modulation of a building mass, when that would be out of character with simpler historic building forms in the area. Too much variation in building massing is inappropriate.
- 9.12 Maintain the scale of traditional building widths in the context.
- Design a new building to reflect the established range of the traditional building widths in the character area.
  - Where a building must exceed this width, use changes in design features so the building reads as separate building modules reflecting traditional building widths and massing. Changes in the expression and details of materials, changes in window design, facade height or materials are examples of techniques that should be considered.
  - Where these articulation techniques are used, they shall be expressed consistently throughout the structure, such that the composition appears as several building modules. Attention to the designs of transitions between modules is important. Too much variation, which results in an overly busy design, is inappropriate.
- 9.13 A block-long building facade is inappropriate.
- A block-long building width will be considered if the facade reads as separate building modules.

## Building Materials

9.20 Building materials shall be similar in scale, color, texture and finish to those seen historically in the context.

- a. Masonry (i.e., brick and stone) that has a modular dimension similar to those used traditionally is appropriate.
- b. A facade that faces a public street should have one principal material, excluding door and window openings, and may have one to two additional materials for trim and details. Permitted materials include, but are not limited to, brick, stone, terracotta, painted metal, exposed metal, poured concrete and precast concrete.
- c. The material also should be appropriate to the context.

9.21 Contemporary materials that are similar in character to traditional ones will be considered.

- a. Generally, one primary material should be used for a building with one or two accent materials. Accent materials should be used with restraint.
- b. A second material may be used on side or rear walls in a context in which such a tradition is demonstrated historically. It is inappropriate in the Water Power Area.
- c. A glass curtain wall will be considered as a principal material.
- d. Contemporary, alternative materials should appear similar in scale, durability and proportion to those used traditionally.
- e. Cementitious-fiber board, with exemplary detailing, will be considered in lower scaled residential settings. Other imitation or synthetic siding materials, such as plastic, aluminum or vinyl, are inappropriate in the lower scale residential contexts.

## Water Power Character Area Building Design

10.9 A new facade should reflect the established range of building widths.

- a. A block-long facade building massing is not appropriate.

### **Above Referenced Zoning Code Provision (applicable section is underlined):**

530.120. Building design. (a) *Building walls*. Building walls shall provide architectural detail and shall contain windows as required in this section in order to create visual interest and to increase the security of adjacent outdoor spaces by maximizing natural surveillance and visibility. In larger buildings, architectural elements, including recesses or projections, windows and entries, shall be emphasized to divide the building into smaller identifiable sections. Blank, uninterrupted walls that do not include windows, entries, recesses or projections, or other architectural elements, shall not exceed twenty five (25) feet in length. Exterior materials shall be durable, including but not limited to masonry, brick, stone, stucco, wood, metal, and glass. The exterior materials and appearance of the rear and side walls of any building shall be similar to and compatible with the front of the building. The use of plain face concrete block as an exterior material shall be prohibited where fronting along a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or adjacent to a residence or office residence district.

### **Above Referenced Comprehensive Plan Policies:**

Transportation Policy 2.3: Encourage walking throughout the city by ensuring that routes are safe, comfortable, pleasant, and accessible.

- 2.3.2 Identify and encourage the development of pedestrian routes within Activity Centers, Growth Centers, and other commercial areas that have superior pedestrian facilities.

- 2.3.5 Continue to enforce standards for building placement and design based primarily on the needs of pedestrians.

Transportation Policy 2.10: Support the development of a multi-modal Downtown transportation system that encourages an increasingly dense and vibrant regional center.

- 2.10.4 Improve the pedestrian environment Downtown to ensure it is a safe, enjoyable, and accessible place to walk. Encourage strategies such as wider sidewalks for pedestrian movement, trees, landscaping, street furniture, improved transit facilities, additional bicycle facilities, and on-street parking and other curbside uses.



## Mill City Quarter Project Narrative

The project site for the Mill City Quarter development is bounded by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the south, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to the west, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east and the River West high-rise complex and Mill Place building to the north. The site is currently occupied by a large surface parking lot. The proposed project is an infill, dense urban development that will include mostly residential units, plus a modest amount of commercial/retail space. This use is consistent with the C3A zoning of the site and with the adjacent residential and retail uses. It will be a transit-oriented mixed-use development that will occur in two phases and will greatly enhance the connectivity from the Mill District neighborhood to the Mississippi River.

Mill Place, Inc. owns the rail spur "swoop" which divides the two city parcels along a SE to NW axis, leading from Second Street to the riverfront. Mill Place ownership has been actively engaged in the four year discussion, and both ownership groups recognize the importance of making a pedestrian/bike/river connection through collaboration and easements. Option 'A' shows possibilities on the City owned land, while Option 'B' offers further possibilities with cross easements on Mill Place's land. Both options will be vetted with the HPC/CPC review. Regardless of the option chosen, the final riverfront connection depends upon the willingness and cooperation of the City of Minneapolis and Mpls. Park Board, which own the property from Mill Place boundary north to the river.

The development team and Mill Place desire a collaborative space in the "swoop" that functions like a Dutch 'Woonerf' where bikes/cars pedestrians and public spaces all co-exist, and speeds are reduced for cars. Shared parking at off-peak times is a consideration for Mill Place. Grant funds to implement the design, connections and amenities on the City and MPRB property are not included in the current proposal, but will be part of the City and MPRB discussion.

Phase 1 of the development will consist of a six-story building that will include up to 140 rental housing units (100%affordable at 50% and 60% MMI) and up to 15,000 sq ft of destination retail space. This will add a desirable mixture of housing choices that are currently needed and underrepresented in this neighborhood. Approximately 160 parking stalls will be provided at grade and below ground for the development of Phase 1. Access to the parking facility will be from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street with an option to utilize a shared access with the Mill Place property owner. Bicycle parking will be provided to meet a ratio of 1 bike space per dwelling unit.

The design will include landscaped open spaces to facilitate pedestrian traffic and gathering of people and also to enhance the pedestrian experience around the building and therefore the connectivity of the West River Parkway with the neighborhood and other means of mass transit. This development will create a pedestrian-friendly, green streetscape connecting the West River Parkway with the bus transit network, the bikeway system and the cultural and recreational opportunities abundant in the Mill District area along Second Street.

A large landscaped plaza adjacent to the "swoop" could provide safe and inviting outdoor spaces for relaxing and socializing. Trees and native perennials and grasses could line the shared streets. This project team is committed to demonstrating a number of best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management and Low-Impact Development (LID). Some of the concepts and techniques being proposed include rainwater harvesting, vegetated walls, pervious paving, pixilated parking, green roofs and underground detention.

Using historical site photos as inspiration, the concept is to use rails, rail replicas, and/or paving materials to abstract the pattern of a rail yard. Within this framework we would hope to create plaza spaces that bridge the two parcels and surround the historic spur location. We envision this space to be similar to the Dutch "woonerf" (shared street) concept noted above in that it will be curbsless, defining vehicular travel lanes via bollards and changes in paving surface type/color. A woonerf is designed for very slow speeds, (20 mph) similar to those typically found in parking lots. It allows the pedestrian to become the focus of the space and the vehicle is seen as the "visitor". This woonerf design is more pronounced in the 'B' Option, but the 'A' Option does have select spaces for similar treatment if less substantial cross

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easements are the limits of cooperation between adjoining owners. The space could be enhanced with tree, shrub, and perennial plantings – keeping in concert with the understanding of the historic district.

Site connections for the Phase 2 project units will focus on protected and flexible outdoor space. We envision exploring a three-season space that connects directly to the woonerf/river connection path. This space will be paired with an atrium space and/or light wells within the building to bring natural light into the space and allow indoor plants to flourish. Both indoor and outdoor plants will be chosen to enhance the care of those residents in assisted living and memory care, as there are particular plants that can trigger memory and bring pleasure.

The building exterior of Phase I will include metal panels, creatively detailed cement board panels, decorative metal grills, glass and some masonry. The design of the exterior takes its cues from the surrounding historic architecture. Strong influence was drawn upon from the adjacent metal clad and steel Milwaukee Road train shed with its rhythmic and repetitive structure and including the perforated, curved bracket details which are reflected in the curved forms of the "round" scheme. The massing of the building is broken into two pieces. Along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue the massing and repetition of the adjacent historic warehouses, Dunn Brothers building, and the Milwaukee Road is continued in the proposed building whose face continues the rhythm and scale of these historic buildings. Along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street the building's long, linear mass reflects that of the adjacent train shed. Both of the schemes presented include windows consistent in proportion to adjacent buildings. Their consistent repetition and order is given a contemporary stroke with multiple stories of fenestration being combined in larger openings in a rhythmic pattern. In this way the building reflects the time in which it is being built while relating to its historic context.

Balconies along the primary street facades will be recessed so that the railing is in line with the elevation while "Juliette" balconies will be incorporated on the non-primary building walls.

### **Project Data**

Estimated Lot size Phase 1: 49,782 sq ft or 1.143 acres

Estimated Lot size Phase 2: 57,100 sq ft or 1.311 acres

(The final lot divisions will depend upon additional partner considerations above and beyond the average split of 53,441 square feet and allocation of existing parking burdens and accommodations to neighboring properties.)

### **Phase I – West Building**

Building Footprint: 24,430 sq ft (49% lot coverage)

Total Building Area: 204,250 sq ft

Building Area (excluding parking): 156,830 sq ft

Building setbacks: 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street – 0 feet; east – 0 to 20 feet; north – 20 feet

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): 3.15

Dwelling Units: 140 units

Minimum Lot Area (MLA): 356 sq ft

Off-Street parking: 160 stalls