

BRYN MAWR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

July 20, 2018

Heather Worthington
Director of Long Range Planning
Office of Community Planning and Development (CPED)
105 5th Avenue South Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55401

CC: Lisa Goodman, City Council Member Ward 7

Director Worthington;

The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association (BMNA) created a working group to review the draft Minneapolis 2040 plan and also hosted a community forum on July 9th, 2018 which drew over 80 residents from the neighborhood. Residents' concerns and comments are reflected below and the BMNA Board requests this input be reflected in the new version due to be released September 2018.

ISSUES

I. Maintain the Character of Small Neighborhoods: "The Neighborhood within a Park"

Bryn Mawr (BM) is a mature urban neighborhood with a unique character and strong identity as a small town and village. Families have resided here for generations and chose to live in Bryn Mawr due to its quiet community feeling of connectedness and neighborliness. It adds value to the city because of its high quality of life. Bryn Mawr is tree lined, pedestrian friendly, human scaled, safe and livable.

Request: When considering new development, there is a strong desire by BM residents to maintain Bryn Mawr's light footprint and further strengthen the neighborhood's connection to its natural environment of green space and parks. Greater density should not be accomplished at the expense of our environment and quality of life.

II. Include All Small Area Plans

Concern: The Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan was not included in the draft 2040 document. A Land Use Committee of committed neighborhood volunteers met bi-monthly for 18 months to develop the plan which included a detailed inventory and analysis of the entire area, incorporated public input throughout, and was approved by the neighborhood and City Council. Although developed in 2005, its vision and conclusions are still relevant to today's conversations and reflect the comments made at the July forum.

Request: The revised Minneapolis 2040 planning document should include the Bryn Mawr small area plan and support its recommendations.

III. Reconsider Building Heights and Blanket Upzoning

Concern: Strong concerns were raised regarding proposed building heights in the Bryn Mawr corridor designations and the potential for fourplexes in all residential neighborhoods. Residents feel such designations and rezoning decisions are best made at the neighborhood level and oppose lifting current zoning throughout the entire city for three and four units in all neighborhoods. Blanket upzoning targets all residential lots, would destabilize communities and encourage speculation. There is no empirical evidence that density achieves housing affordability, rather it is often associated with less affordability in part because building bigger and higher costs more per unit.

Additionally, residents feel any new developments should have a compatible scale with the surrounding area and complement the existing character of buildings and residences. Jarring and incongruent scale pocketed randomly throughout existing single-family neighborhoods does not represent responsible development. Dramatically increased heights make more sense when they are incorporated into a mixed commercial/residence use space where buildings are of similar size, where empty land can be developed, or where existing tall structures can be repurposed for residential development.

Request: Remove blanket upzoning from the plan and instead include strategic policies for density that are sensible and targeted and that will help rather than harm existing residents and neighborhoods as change occurs. Conduct research and prioritize areas which could benefit from denser building.

If the revised September plan still includes the corridor designations identified in the draft version, we are requesting specific corridor changes.

Specific Requests

Change Interior 3 areas to Interior 2

Locations:

5 Blocks from 394 to Chestnut Ave W, the West side of Oliver Ave S. and the East Side of Queen Ave S., North side of any East/West Street south of Glenwood. These blocks are representative of single family homes with a variety of housing styles such as Victorian, bungalow, four-square, split-level, one story and many more. This mix of styles and ages of homes, along with the parks and other natural amenities create a diverse and beautiful environment. They also represent affordable starter home properties. An Interior 3 designation would allow for the combination of parcels for multi-family buildings and an allowable height of 3 stories. Such potential new buildings would be juxtaposed across the street from Interior 2 homes on narrow streets with potentially no added off-street parking. Current residents have made financial investments in these properties, chose them for the area amenities, and would like to

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remain in the neighborhood. Such changes could potentially disrupt and displace families and individuals who have lived here for decades.

Change Interior 4 areas to Interior 3

Locations:

5 Blocks on each side of Penn Ave from 394 to Chestnut Ave W; the former Burma Shave building, Former Fruen Mill area, and the south side of Glenwood Ave on 3 blocks near Theodore Wirth Lake.

These blocks are primarily representative of single family homes as well as includes downtown Bryn Mawr at the intersection of Penn Ave and Cedar Lake Road S. The downtown area is the center of the Bryn Mawr neighborhood and serves as a socializing and gathering place for residents. It presently serves the functions identified in the complete neighborhood section of the 2040 plan. It provides retail services residents can walk to—coffee shop, grocery store, pizzeria/delicatessen, gift/antique stores, beauty salon, restaurant, dentist, chiropractic and wellness services, yoga classes, etc. Residents like the charm of the small scale commercial area, the architecture of current buildings and want to keep the current size of downtown. The preference for new development is to be small businesses with a soft commercial theme. Residents are concerned an upzoning to 4 stories would invite commercial developers who would find it most profitable to tear down existing structures and substitute existing businesses with national franchises.

Change Corridor 6 areas to Interior 2

Locations:

Cedar Lake Townhomes and two residential blocks south of S. Wayzata Blvd—Cedar Lake Road and Thomas Ave: This area is comprised of a 41 unit mid-century modern townhome complex built in the mid-1970's and nearly 20 single family homes built over a timeframe from the 1950's to present remodels. The over 60 residents of this several block areas have made personal investments to keep the building structures and landscaping updated. Mixing single-family with multifamily could affect the value and long-term appreciation of their homes. Many residents have lived in this area for generations as it represented an opportunity to live in a quiet, affordable residential community with access to recreational opportunities and green space. Residents have expressed strong feelings about retaining the existing make-up of the community as a combination single family home and townhome development. Making a change to a potential 6 story height would require tear-downs of current affordable housing which has meet the needs of many moderate to average income residents for decades.

Change Transit 10 areas to Corridor 4

Locations:

North Frontage/Former Century Link/Quest Building: Located on N. Wayzata Blvd, this property is south of the Bryn Mawr Elementary School

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and Anwatin Middle School and east of Theodore Wirth Park. The building and surrounding land has been purchased by Swervo Development, owned by Ned Abdul. Swervo plans to keep the footprint of the existing building as office space for the development company and lease remaining space to other office tenants. Additionally, a partnership has been created with Lupe Development to create senior housing to the east and affordable housing to the west. In May 2018, Steve Minn, Co-Partner of Lupe Development presented potential concepts at a community design charette. Lupe has been receptive to community input; which includes lower building heights, promotion of good urban design and architecture compatible with surrounding neighborhood, protection of Wirth Park green space and ample parking space for potential residents. A four-story building height will meet the goals of Lupe Development and the interests of the neighborhood.

South Frontage: 10 Office Parcels owned by different individuals bounded by residential housing to the east, south and west. Presently there are no pending proposals to develop this space. It has proven to be a difficult area to attract retail businesses as S. Wayzata Blvd, the northern boundary, has fast traffic flows and there is limited off-street parking. Neighbors would like to see an improved site which would enhance the quality of life for residents, mitigate freeway noise, and fit the design esthetics of the community. The BM Land use plan recommended a low to medium density mixed use development of residences and commercial spaces. A potential 10 story building on two blocks surrounded by residential homes would be incongruent with the neighborhood.

Change Transit 15 areas to Corridor 6

Locations:

Former Prudential Insurance/Target Building: This mid-century office building located on S. Wayzata Blvd. has been purchased by Minnetonka Based Opus Group, a commercial real estate company. Opus met with City Council member Lisa Goodman and stated they plan to maintain the existing footprint of the building, do a minimal amount of remodeling, and intend to lease the building for office tenant space. This property was once part of the Theodore Wirth Park system. A designation for potentially 15 stories does not fit in with the surrounding residential community and the remaining green space of Brownie Lake.

South Gateway: This area, defined as South Gateway in the BM Land Use plan, is located on S. Wayzata Blvd near the Penn Ave/394 intersection. It includes property owned by 3 different groups:

- Lurie LLP, a 78-year-old Minneapolis based accounting firm.
- Bolin Marketing and Advertising, a Minneapolis based brand advertiser.

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- Joffe Medi-Center, a Cincinnati, Ohio medical provider owned by Dr. Stephen Joffe, the founder of LASIK Plus. Joffe owns four lots, with one operating as a one-story Lasik clinic, and 3 empty lots totaling 1.88 acres.

In 2010/2011, when Southwest Light Rail conversations were being held, Bryn Mawr created the South Gateway Plan to analyze whether or not development around the light rail station was feasible. Due to the downturn in the economy at that time forward movement on any plan was halted. However, the planning process provided important information about neighborhood preferences and concerns; and 2018 conversations reveal similar themes.

- Housing should be low to medium density, no higher than 6 stories.
- Interest in a multi-use facility providing townhomes / condos for young adults and empty nesters/seniors.
- Concern about space limitations for parking on Madeira Ave as it is already used by business/worker traffic from Bolin and Lurie.
- Traffic congestion on S. Wayzata Blvd. is already extremely heavy due to inbound West End vehicles.
- The planned SWLT station will only exacerbate these congestion and parking problems, add bus traffic as well, and all trying to get on a small entry ramp to 394.

With these neighborhood concerns and the fact the land available is relatively small in size, bordered by bluffs to the south, and a busy access road to the north, a maximum of 6 stories, as opposed to a ceiling of 15 stories, would best fit into a location next to mature residential property.

Sincerely,

Kevin Thompson
President, Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association
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