

PPA Land Use meeting minutes February 11, 2021

Attendees (via Zoom):

John Wicks (Chair), Eric Amel, Jeff Barnhart, David Frank, Dick Gilyard, Florence Littman, Ron McCoy, Vera Marshall, Karen Murdock, Joe Ring, Evan Roberts, Donna Schneider, Helen Sahlin, Jan Stockman, Lynn Von Korff

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. Approval of the minutes of the January meeting was postponed until the March meeting.

Discussion ensued on the proposed Design Guidelines for new development in Prospect Park (attached). Lynn gave some background on how these Guidelines were developed. They were developed last fall by a committee which met four times. Members of the committee were Jeff Barnhart, David Frank, Dick Gilyard, Bruce Jacobson, John Kari, Ron McCoy, Laura Preus, Joe Ring and Lynn VonKorff. The last meeting of the group was held on December 30, 2020, at which point the draft guidelines were approved. A link to the document was given in the January 2021 newsletter of the Prospect Park Association. (The newsletters are posted on the website of the association so anyone with internet access can find them and read them.) Lynn said that several members of the Board of Directors have expressed an interest in seeing more about seeking equity for renters in Prospect Park.

Dick said that the process of developing the Design Guidelines began about eight years ago in the University District Alliance. He said the intent was to go “beyond the measurables” (such things as maximum height permitted and required parking—these things which are already part of the city zoning code). Projects which follow the guidelines will contribute to “the health and diversity of the neighborhood.” A developer like Jeff Barnhart is already quite familiar with the desires of the neighborhood, so the Design Guidelines would be most helpful to a new developer who has never done a project in Prospect Park. Dick pointed out that every project presents a different set of opportunities and challenges, so some of the Design Guidelines might not apply to a proposed development. On the other hand, some of the Design Guidelines might be of great importance to the proposed project. In any event, if the Guidelines are approved, a developer will know “what the neighborhood is hoping for” before any architectural drawings are made.

Dick said the ultimate goal is for the Design Guidelines, which in their current form take up three pages, be reduced to one page. Florence said “people do not read three pages” and she hoped for a stronger emphasis on historic preservation.

Lynn commented that a developer might not be able to meet all of the goals laid out in the Design Guidelines.

Eric commented upon the provision for “dark skies” called for in the Guidelines. He said that he has two new puppies that he takes for walks at night. He said he has been struck by the enormous spillage of light from the parking lot behind Pratt School. “Dark skies” initiatives try to direct lights down towards the ground rather than up towards the heavens and to keep light from a given piece of property from spilling out onto other properties. He said that in his opinion the street lights at Pratt are “obnoxious,” wasting a lot of energy and spreading a lot of light about in all directions.

John W. said that a task force could be formed which would consist of volunteers who would walk around the neighborhood to find places where light is spilling beyond property boundaries. (Perhaps because the state is in the midst of a pergelic cold snap and night windchills are around 30 below, nobody seemed eager to join such a task force and one was not formed.)

Florence recommended stronger protections for Glendale. The housing project has in the past been under threat of demolition. John said that Glendale was mentioned several times in the Guidelines. Florence said that city planners have not been good about enforcing rules and regulations that already exist.

Joe said the state of Minnesota has a relatively new rule governing teardowns in historic districts. He said the proposed Design Guidelines had already had a positive impact, since they had led to the abandonment of the proposed extended-stay hotel at the Schneider Drug site.

Evan presented a motion to amend the Guidelines by eliminating the language calling for housing for residents who make less than 30 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). He said that land values in Prospect Park are higher than values in other nearby neighborhoods and that any affordable housing units here would have to be heavily subsidized. He said that the recently proposed Kraus-Anderson housing development at University and Raymond in Saint Paul had a mix of housing price points, including affordable housing. The city of Minneapolis currently has an affordable housing requirement for new apartments in buildings of more than 20 units. Between 4 and 8 percent of such units must be “affordable,” depending upon how affordable they are to low-income Minneapolitans. (However, developers can escape such requirements by paying into a city fund.) He said that developers are not obliged to engage in discussion with individuals or neighborhood associations in areas in which they propose to develop

something. He felt that developers might be turned off if a neighborhood gave specific numbers on units of affordable housing. He said that two ways in which developers could create cheap housing were to use “stick frame” construction and to make individual units smaller.

Lynn said that over half of all renters in Prospect Park are “cost burdened,” in part because of the high price of land in this neighborhood. She did not favor the proposed amendment, as the Design Guidelines have already been posted to the PPA website.

Jeff said the proposed Design Guidelines would send the message that “the neighborhood truly cares” about providing housing to its poorest residents. He said that “if the developer doesn’t want to cooperate, none of this really matters.” He felt that it would be impossible to satisfy everyone in the neighborhood and that the proposed Guidelines should be adopted without amendment. He said the Guidelines “set the tone” for things to which Prospect Park aspired, even though “most of it is unenforceable.” He pointed out that although most of the evening’s discussion has been about housing, most development is for commercial uses.

Florence voiced concern that single-family homes could be torn down and replaced by cheaply-built apartments.

Dick proposed that the Guidelines be adopted and that the neighborhood subsequently keeps a close eye on new development to see what works and what doesn’t work in the Guidelines.

The proposed Roberts amendment failed on a vote of 5-4 with two abstentions.

Lynn moved adoption of the original Design Guidelines. The motion passed on a vote of 12-0, with four abstentions.

Ron said he had created two documents in December which related to the Design Guidelines. One is a flow chart about how the Guidelines could be used. The other is a set of Frequently Asked Questions about the Guidelines. He said he will send these documents to members of the Land Use Committee.

Dick said he has heard from several friends who now lived at The Pillars of Prospect Park (at Malcolm and University). The stretch of 4th Street by The Pillars had been envisaged as “Green Fourth,” with elements encouraging pedestrian traffic. However, that street has now become used by truckers who wish to avoid the intersection of Malcolm and University, which presents a turning radius which is difficult for large trucks to negotiate. Evan said the Transportation Committee, which he chairs, is monitoring this

development.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Murdock

ATTACHMENT

Proposed Prospect Park Unified Project Design Standards, 2/6/21

Introduction:

The Unified Project Design Standards have been crafted to provide planning and design guidance to all parties with a stake or role in the development and redevelopment of Prospect Park, St. Anthony Park and the Towerside Innovation District. These planning and design standards are based on community values and aspirations and the Eco-District Imperatives of Equity, Resilience and Climate Protection. A primary purpose the cities of Minneapolis and St Paul had in designating the geography of the Towerside Innovation District, located within the St Anthony Park and Prospect Park neighborhoods, was to serve as a replicable model of 21st century urban redevelopment. All projects within these two neighborhoods are charged with the responsibility of incorporating these principles and to the enrichment of this place, its beauty and its livability by excellence of design.

1-Infrastructure/Basic Systems

District Systems

District wide Systems - Connect to and participate in district-wide energy, storm water, parking and open space systems when available or under consideration. When district-wide systems are not available design for future connection to them.

Green space

Preserve and expand viable green space on site that includes natural landscapes and contributes to an interconnected public realm, in addition to any green space required by municipality. Do not designate green space to be private or inaccessible to the public.

Connectivity

Connectivity - Create and maintain pedestrian and bicycle paths to and through the site and enhance connections to public trail networks and district wide systems. Employ TOD principles and address first/last mile connectivity issues across multiple modes of transportation.

Parking

If the development cannot participate in shared parking or district wide parking facility, provide required parking for staff, and/or residents on site, preferably within or below structures. Reduce parking needs to support pedestrian, bicycle and transit usage.

Streetscape Pedestrian Zones

Streetscape and Pedestrian Zone – Enhance the public realm by placing shops, restaurants and other active uses on the sidewalk level to provide “eyes on the street.” Provide large glazing areas to make visual connections to interior spaces and invest in streetscape enhancements. Use design principles and building materials that promote quality and permanence.

Sustainability & Health

Identify and meet appropriate performance targets for storm water, energy and water use, indoor air quality, healthy and renewable materials, construction waste and dark skies.

2- Historical Perspective/Livability Enhancements/Improvements

Historic Preservation

Preserve or repurpose historic structures and fabric whenever possible, whether designated on National Register of Historic Places or not (see page 2-3).

Art Culture & Design

Include culturally relevant public art as part of the design of the building and site, source local artists, and include community in the process.

Affordable Housing & Mixed Option Housing

Affordable and Mixed Option Housing – In projects that are primarily housing, provide a minimum of 30% of the units to be affordable to people with incomes between 30 and 60% of AMI. Provide mixture of 1, 2 and 3 Bedroom units with appropriate amenities for populations served. A broad range of housing types, including co-housing, artist lofts and

live/workspaces are encouraged.

Collaborative or Maker Spaces

Collaborative and Maker Spaces – Create spaces in buildings, especially at ground level that can be part of the collaborative commons. When appropriate, make some portion of the building available for public use or commerce.

Urban Context

Urban Context – Respect and reinforces the intrinsic character, scale and architectural fabric of the neighborhood and adjacent properties.

Adaptability

Design structures to create flexible, adaptable spaces with high ceilings and long span structures for evolving future uses.

The following elements apply in the Prospect Park neighborhood. Every neighborhood has one or more assets, symbols, or attributes that make it unique. The Minneapolis Prospect Park neighborhood is no exception (map of Prospect Park neighborhood, page 3).

1. Preserve Glendale Townhomes as Public Housing for residents

Description: Glendale is currently home to Southeast Asian, Somali, Native American, African-American and European-American families. The Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), administered by the Prospect Park Association from 1992-2012, contributed significant funding to support Glendale and NRP funds made it possible to reopen Pratt, where many Glendale children attend elementary school.

Prospect Park Association voted in 2018 to support the historic designation of Glendale Townhomes. In 2020, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Committee voted to approve Glendale’s historic designation nomination.

Built in 1952, Glendale has 184 single-family units administered by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA). Glendale is an exceptional example of mid-century American public housing. Aldermen Dale Stanchfield and Glen Wallace, with the support of Prospect Park neighborhood, pushed for the creation of moderately priced rental homes for veterans studying at the University, and their families. Its opening was celebrated by Hubert Humphrey, Mayor Eric Hoyer, and the President of the University of Minnesota.

2. Preserve views of and from the Witches Hat Water Tower, including views from the observation deck. Additionally, preserve the current Westward views from Tower Hill Park, including unique views of the downtown Minneapolis skyline from the base of the Tower.

Description: The “Witch’s Hat” water tower, built in 1913 by the City of Minneapolis, is

one of the few original water towers left standing in the Twin Cities. Thousands of visitors climb its steps each year for an unobstructed 360° view of the Minneapolis and St Paul city skylines and Mississippi river valley. Prospect Park residents purchased “Tower Hill Park” in 1906, gifting it to the City Parks department for a water tower. Because the tower sits atop the highest natural land area in Minneapolis, the Parks Department required a viewing deck as a condition of construction. The observation deck has a 360-degree view and is located at an elevation of 1,030 feet. The Witch’s Hat rises to an elevation of 1,080 feet. The Tower and Tower Hill Park were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. This popular park with its view of the City of Minneapolis skyline from the base of the Tower, elevation 971 feet, is accessible year round. The view is particularly popular at sunset.

Prospect Park draws strength from the historic landmark of the Prospect Park “Witch’s Hat” Water Tower and from the diversity of its housing stock. The Water Tower is the unique and irreplaceable landmark of the City of Minneapolis and Prospect Park neighborhood, so it is essential to preserve open views both of the Tower and also from the Tower.

Ordinances in transit 10 areas near the Witches Hat Tower and Historic district should be observed and extra scrutiny given to any height and setback variance requests. The ordinances should be the limit for height and setbacks.

3. Preserve the Nationally Designated Residential Historic Neighborhood

Description: The historic Prospect Park residential district was nationally designated in 2015. The district includes an eclectic mix of historic single-family homes and rentals, including over 200 duplexes, triplexes, and 4-plexes. The district is bounded by the diagonal line of University Avenue on the north; Emerald Street, the boundary line with Saint Paul on the east; the diagonal sound barrier wall that separates the historic district from Interstate 94 on the south; and portions of Arthur Avenue, Williams Avenue, and Malcolm Avenue on the west (map of Historic District, below). All contributing properties in the historic district are covered by the State Mandatory EAW Rule 4410-4300 Sub 31.

4. Preserve and Enhance Natural and Built Environment near Mississippi River

Description: Development near the Mississippi River should be designed to preserve and improve the natural and built environment, ensuring that future generations continue to benefit from the resource (see Policy 97 Minneapolis 2040).

Map of Prospect Park Neighborhood

Map of Historic District Contributing Properties

According to a table at HYPERLINK "<https://nwhomepartners.org/area-median-income-ami/>" <https://nwhomepartners.org/area-median-income-ami/>, the median income for one person in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area is \$72,350. Thirty percent of this is \$21,700.)