

Community Charrette for CVS Store **Held at University UNITED Planning Center December 30, 2003**

Minutes prepared by Brian McMahon (651) 647-6711

More than 50 people attended the charrette. The meeting began with introductions and general comments. The attendees included two city councilmembers from Minneapolis and one from St. Paul; numerous staff and agency people from both cities; staff from the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority; labor union officials; many representatives from community groups and development organizations; university staff; private developers; a representative from St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce; and four or five architects. A list of attendees is attached. The meeting was chaired by Tim Griffin, Director of the St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center. It was made clear that CVS was welcomed as a business, and that concerns were only directed to the design of their stores. Tim recommended that in order to facilitate the process of the charrette the group come up with a range of design possibilities numbered 1 to 5 (least acceptable to most acceptable), rather than one preferred option. The current plan CVS submitted for the Snelling and University location, which called for a building on the corner, was deemed to be a 2. Brian McMahon, from University UNITED, passed around several handouts including the CVS proposal, guidelines for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) developed by the Met Council, and a worksheet showing how the CVS proposal did not meet the TOD guidelines. Dave Gagne, from Hamline Midway Coalition, spoke about the specifics of the CVS proposal, gave background information on the series of meetings held with the CVS developer, and described a community-based planning effort completed for that intersection. Dave introduced architect Tom Dobbs, consultant for the planning study, who spoke about findings and methods of the earlier study.

The group then separated into three working sub-groups to explore design issues, ranging from a modified single-use occupancy project, to proposals for a four and five story mixed-use projects. Photos of CVS stores from around the country were distributed. Each group had at least one design professional to lead the discussion. After an hour, the entire group re-convened for presentations by the three sub-groups and discussion. All of the proposed options met with the stated goal of being transit and pedestrian friendly, and included a signature building on this critical corner. The sentiment of the group was an overwhelming preference for a larger mixed-use complex. It was also acknowledged that some thorny issues, such as adequate parking, could best be addressed by looking beyond the one-acre parcel under study.

Summary of Design Ideas from Three Groups

Group One worked on a plan that would accept the single-use, owner-occupancy model proposed by CVS, and the basic footprint and building massing. They proposed creating the main entrance on University, and showed a greatly improved architectural design. They added doors and windows on the street sides of the building. The 30' height of the

proposed CVS allows for a mezzanine level and an additional row of windows. A built-in bus shelter was also included. In addition, a very dramatic accent tower or lantern was suggested for the corner, which could be rear-lit and contain public art. The CVS entrance could be moved to the middle of the Snelling Avenue side. The design would have considerable transparency, and be very pedestrian friendly and interesting. It was also recommended that the sidewalks be widened, perhaps by having the building be setback approximately five feet. Finally, it was recommended that the curb-cut on University Avenue (for the drive through window) be eliminated for safety reasons.

Group Two explored a mixed-use project with two floors of housing above a row of small liner shops (approximately 1,000 square feet each) facing University Avenue. In this proposal, CVS is pushed behind the liner shops and oriented more to Snelling Avenue, and the rear parking lot. An arcade, possibly enclosed, would run along Snelling and connect the rear parking lot to CVS and the small liner shops on University Avenue. The Snelling side of the building would be set back, perhaps 15 feet, to accommodate the arcade. The surface parking in the rear was reduced somewhat and underground parking was also provided.

Group Three concluded that because this site is at the busiest intersection in the state, and may eventually be a key light-rail hub, only a multi-story mixed-use building should be built. Low-density, auto-oriented development would not generate sufficient tax base or promote the broader community goal of a revitalized University Avenue corridor linking the two downtowns. If CVS did not have an interest in undertaking a mixed-use development, it was recommended they explore partnering with another developer. If CVS was not interested in exploring these alternatives, this group felt it was important to hold out for a better project.

Group Three sketched two design approaches. Option A called for a 5-story mixed-use project with the building massing stepping back on the upper levels. CVS and other retail would be located on the ground floor, and there would be several levels of underground parking. Option B explored the possibility of combining CVS with a civic use, perhaps a library. This design featured an open civic space on the corner of Snelling and University, which could include a fountain or public art. A stepped up multi-story building was then wrapped around the civic space.

Next Steps The results of the charrette are posted on University UNITED's website where it will be accessible to the larger community for comment and feedback. In addition, it is hoped that a meeting with CVS officials can be arranged to share the charrette results with them in the hope of finding common ground. Tim Griffin of the Design Center, and Councilmember Jay Benanav are taking the lead in arranging this meeting.

Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held on Thursday February 5, at 3:30 PM at the St. Paul City Council chambers to discuss this project. The community is invited to discuss this important issue.

Attendance List (Not Complete)

Councilmember Jay Benanav, City of St. Paul
Councilmember Paul Ostrow, City of Minneapolis
Councilmember Dan Niziolek, City of Minneapolis
Jane Prince, Legislative Aide to Councilmember Benanav
Michael Krause, Green Institute
William Waterkamp, St. Paul Public Schools
Bernie Hesse, UFCW 789/ Neighborhood
Erik Holland, Snelling Hamline Community Council
Betsy Leach, Hamline Midway Neighbors for Peace
Jim Lavalle
Mike Madden, Merriam Park Community Council
Rob McCready, MetroPlains Development
Chris Conry, UFLW 789
Ted Turner, Marcy Holmes Neighborhood, Minneapolis
Kristen Kidder, District 7 Planning Council
Andrew Comfort, Resident/ Designer
Steve Morris, Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority
Thomas Dobbs, Hay Dobbs Architects
Dave Gagne, Hamline Midway Coalition
Ellen Watters, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
Bill Gahr, President, University UNITED
John Vaughn, Northeast Community Development Corporation, Minneapolis
Molly McCartney, 1000 Friends of Minnesota
Jessica Treat, Lexington-Hamline Community Council
Greg Simbeck, Southeast Como
Sherman Eagles, St. Anthony Park Community Council
Tom Beach, St. Paul License, Inspection, Environmental Protection
Beth Munnich, Corridor Housing Initiative
Gretchen Nicholls, Center for Neighborhoods
Stephanie Alstead, SPARC, and resident
Gary Shallcross, University of Minnesota student, resident
Dan Marckel, Design Center, University of Minnesota
Jack Byers, Minneapolis CPED/ Planning
Pete Keely, ESG Architects/ Merriam Park Community Council
Brian Lubben, Walsh Bishop Architects
Yang Zhang, St. Paul Planning and Economic Development
Lee Ronning, 1000 Friends of Minnesota
Sam Riesgraf, University UNITED Board/ Kraus-Anderson
Larry Soderholm, St. Paul Planning and Economic Development

Stuart Goldberg, St. Paul Housing Campaign
Jeanne Weigum, Friends of the Parks and Trails
Jim McDonough, Summit-University Planning Council
Janna Vukelich, Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers
Triesta Warns, Hamline Midway Coalition
Jonathan Sage-Martinson, SPARC
Rodney McMillan, Summit-University Planning Council
Adrienne Hannert, PPL
Jerry Boardman, Central Community Housing Trust
Tim Griffith, St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center
Brian McMahan, University UNITED