



**DOWNTOWN  
MINNEAPOLIS  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION**

September 9, 2019

Peter Crandall  
City of Minneapolis CPED  
250 South 4th Street, Room 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: Opus project at 301 Nicollet Avenue

Dear Peter:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association regarding the land use application for the Opus project located at 301 Nicollet Avenue. Representatives from Opus, ESG Architects and Ten X Studio presented the project to the DMNA Land Use Committee on two occasions this summer; June 4 and August 5.

At both meetings with the committee, Gretchen Camp from ESG Architects reviewed the architectural drawings for the proposed project. The plan calls for a 20-story mixed-use building with 5,380 square feet of ground floor retail space and 357-370 apartments on the upper floors. The plan also includes a five-level parking ramp with 351 parking spaces accessed off of 3rd Street South. The developer plans to conceal the ramp within the core of the building. Additionally, the developer is proposing a 3,500 square foot motor court with vehicle drop off space. The building frontage along 3rd Street South includes five walk-up townhomes. The primary exterior materials are glass, metal, brick, and stone. Upon conclusion of construction, there will be a 100' wide alleyway between 301 and 365 Nicollet.

After some questions and discussion at the August 5 meeting, the Land Use Committee recommended providing a letter of support for the following land use applications:

- **Site Plan Review**
- **Variance from the Nicollet Mall Overlay Building Placement Standard** – The developer is requesting a variance to the building placement standard of the Nicollet Mall Overlay District that requires the first floor of buildings to be located not more than 8 feet from Nicollet Mall. The building has been set back from Nicollet Mall by more than 8 feet in order to create the more expansive, landscaped public realm that is part of the vision of the Nicollet Mall redesign project. The residential lobby is recessed below the upper floors of the building and set back 24 feet from Nicollet to provide relief from the congested pedestrian area at the corner and a sheltered approach at the residential entry. A canopy-type structure extends from the first floor at the residential entry out toward the street. The canopy and recess distinguish the residential entry from the retail frontage of the building. Just south of the lobby, the retail frontage is set at 8 feet from Nicollet for 42 feet, 8 inches of the façade. The setback of the façade then increases to 20 feet. The 20-foot setback area will be landscaped and provide an opportunity for

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outdoor seating, both for an anticipated restaurant use and for the public. The ground floor of the façade facing 3rd Street is set back 10 feet, 6 inches from the right-of-way to provide additional area for landscaping between the public sidewalk and the building.

- **Variance from the Nicollet Mall Overlay Retail Area Standard** – The developer is also requesting a variance to the standard of the NM Nicollet Mall Overlay District that requires that retail uses occupy at least 60% of the gross floor area of the first-floor area within the Overlay. Commercial retail/restaurant use will occupy approximately 28% of the ground-level gross floor area of the portion of the building in the Overlay. The other 72% percent will include the lobby and leasing office for the residences, a large bike storage room, a lobby and vertical circulation providing public skyway access from Nicollet Mall, and service areas that serve the residential and commercial uses.

The committee has a strong interest in the public realm and wants to see the developer meet or exceed the guidelines established in the Downtown Public Realm Framework. The committee expects that the developer will come back and present more refined public realm plans at a later date.

If you have any questions about this letter, please feel free to contact me at [christie@thedmna.org](mailto:christie@thedmna.org) or by phone at 320-583-4573.

Sincerely,

Christie Rock Hantge  
DMNA Neighborhood Coordinator

CC: Council Member Steve Fletcher  
Joe Tamburino, DMNA Board Chair  
Kevin Frazell, DMNA Land Use Committee Chair  
Gretchen Camp, ESG Architects  
Nick Murnane, Opus