



**DOWNTOWN
MINNEAPOLIS
NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION**

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The DMNA Land Use Committee works to promote a safe, active, and welcoming public realm; a stable, civically engaged residential neighborhood; and architecturally distinctive urban design.

February 23, 2020

Mei-Ling Smith, Principal City Planner
City of Minneapolis CPED
250 South 4th Street, Room 300
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Re: Sherman Associates – Portland and Washington Avenues Mixed-Use project with MFD Station

Dear Mei-Ling:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association regarding Sherman Associates Portland and Washington Avenues Mixed Use project. Representatives from Sherman Associates and ESG Architects have presented an update on the project, along with the land use applications, to the DMNA Land Use Committee on February 5.

Loken summarized the components of the project, which include a 22-story market rate apartment building with 220 parking stalls and two levels of below grade parking; and 6,000 square feet of retail space. There is also a smaller six-story, affordable apartment building with 312 parking spaces that will be open to the public. Finally, the project relocates the existing Minneapolis Fire Department Station 1 from the corner of 3rd Avenue and Portland Avenue to 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue.

Loken then reviewed the following land use applications:

1. Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Planned Unit Development (PUD)
2. Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for construction of a fire station
3. Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for construction of a parking facility
4. Application for Plaza
5. Site Plan Review
6. Preliminary and Final Plat

After some questions and discussion, the DMNA LUC recommended support for the applications numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. Regarding the Site Plan Review (application number 5), the committee made the following recommendations:

Non-support

- **The committee does not support installation of "painted fiber cement panel" material on the street level floor of the affordable apartment building.** It is important to understand that this building is in downtown Minneapolis and fiber cement panels are not consistent with the material on the other buildings in the neighborhood. All the other recently constructed residential buildings in the neighborhood are brick, cast architectural concrete or a type of metal panel. For example the Mill City Quarter, an affordable apartment building on 2nd street, is all brick on all four sides. Using the excuse that this is an "affordable" apartment

building and thus brick is too expensive is not acceptable. There are only two elevations of the building exposed so it is not a significant amount of additional brick. There are four floors above the first floor that are already brick so it is not a hardship or technical problem to install brick on the first floor of the building. This building is in downtown Minneapolis and the public realm deserves a quality building material such as brick to support the quality and integrity of the public realm. Painted fiber cement panel material is simply not acceptable for a downtown building. Every building around this site is made of brick, stone, cast architectural panels or metal panel. This building needs to be of that same standard. Fiber cement panels are appropriate only outside the downtown core.

- **The committee does not support three curb cuts.** It supports allowing only two curb cuts: one off of Portland Avenue and the other off of 5th Avenue. This is a pedestrian safety concern. Having two curb cuts is consistent with what exists at the recently constructed Fleet Farm parking garage.
- **The committee does not support installing a vegetative wall on the two exposed elevations of the parking garage.** The developer has already committed to the neighborhood organization to install instead a building-like wall elevation that is constructed with quality materials such as brick panels. These exposed garage elevations should give the appearance of an occupied building rather than a parking garage.
- **The committee does not support allowing alternative compliance for the identified blank walls on the project.** This is a project in downtown Minneapolis and the building elevations must be respectful to the neighborhood contexts, the pedestrian scale, and the public realm.

Support

- **The committee supports not covering or screening the top level of the parking garage.**
- **The committee supports removing the one existing billboard.** The developer has confirmed that the billboard will be removed from the property, and that it will not be re-installed in any form as part of the new project.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me at christie@thedmna.org, or 320-583-4573.

Kind regards,

Christie Rock Hantge
DMNA Neighborhood Coordinator

CC: Bob Loken, ESG Architects
Ross Stiteley, Sherman Associates
Council Member Steve Fletcher
Pam McCrea, DMNA Board Chair
Kevin Frazell, DMNA Board Liaison to the Land Use Committee
Tom Schmid, DMNA Land Use Committee Chair
LB Guthrie, DMNA Land Use Committee Vice Chair