

DMNA 2020 Land Use Committee Report by Board Member Kevin Frazell

The DMNA Land Use Committee meets monthly to receive presentations from developers and city staff on proposals for new development in our downtown area. The last few years have been "boom times" downtown, with the Committee and DMNA staff often struggling to stay on top of it all. Our focus tends to be placed on matters of the "public realm", that is, how development impacts everyday life for downtown residents, workers, and visitors, whether it is functional pedestrian and bike trails, more green space, street level access to buildings, or visual amenities on the ground and at the top of new buildings.

Things have, of course, been turned on their head during the past year by COVID, the economic recession, and the social unrest following the George Floyd killing in May. Downtown Minneapolis, like central business districts across America and the world, has largely shut down. Proposals for new development have stalled, of course, but perhaps less than many might suppose. The Land Use Committee has received and endorsed proposals for over 1,000 new apartment units, these on top of the many already under construction but not yet open. Washington Avenue, especially at the intersection with Hennepin, continues to hum with construction and the skyline in that area is being transformed. Many developers are taking the attitude that, by the time the new buildings are open, downtown will have recovered and the demand for residential units will be strong.

The last year has also seen the Land Use Committee continuing to pay attention to other details like historic preservation at the Milwaukee Depot and in older buildings like the McKesson, and to proposals for more affordable housing. The Committee has met with staff from the City's Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) to better understand how the new 2040 Comprehensive Plan, which calls for much higher levels of density downtown, will actually be implemented through adoption of the new Built Form zoning regulations, and how those will be applied to review of individual projects.

Yes, downtown Minneapolis faces many challenges as it reemerges and recovers from the multiple crises we have all faced. But with a bird's eye seat to all that is happening, the Land Use Committee believes there is much reason for optimism. The level of past and continuing investment in downtown, both private and public, is impressive! The stadiums and many performing arts venues are in place and planning for reopening, Hennepin Avenue is being beautifully reconstructed, construction of the Southwest Light Rail line is now fully funded and well underway, and the much-needed upgrades to access via I-35 are ahead of schedule. A historic Minnesota company, Deluxe Checks, has announced its relocation to downtown. Construction of the Dayton's Project has been completed. And at its last meeting the LUC received and enthusiastically endorsed an exceptionally important project that testifies to optimism about the future of downtown - a \$6 million upgrade and make over of the iconic Crystal Court! Perhaps best of all, over 50,000 of us now make our homes downtown and will do all we can to ensure its vibrancy and continuing success.

Thank you to the many residents who have contributed to the success of the DMNA Land Use Committee over the past year, including Committee Chair Tom Schmid, Vice Chair L.B. Guthrie, and our resident "man on the street" for all things aesthetic, Randy Manthey. If you care about development

and Land Use Issues, join our now on-line meetings the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. You'll find the agenda posted on the DMNA website homepage about a week prior to the meeting. And if you like what you see, consider joining the Committee as a regular member. We'd love to have your perspective.

DMNA Land Use Projects and Applications Reviewed in 2020

- Harlem Irving Project at 270 Hennepin Avenue
- MNHS Mill City Museum Certificate of Appropriateness application
- Sherman Associations Project at Washington & Portland (includes Fire Station)
- OX-OP Sign applications
- Andrus Renaissance Square Project at 500 Nicollet Mall
- Reuter Walton Project at 200 12th Avenue South
- Sherman Project at 500 7th Street South
- St. Olaf Catholic Church application to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- Liquor license application for the ETC Coffee Bar at Thrivent liquor
- Chimney Repair Project at the Milwaukee Depot
- McKesson Building Certificate of Appropriateness application
- CA Ventures Project at 21 N. Washington Avenue
- Review of the proposed ordinance change for Retractable Security Devices
- Liquor license application for Whiskey & Soda at Rand Tower