



MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 21, 2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
Dave Perrault, City Administrator

FROM: Jessica Jagoe, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Concept Plan Review – 1700 Highway 96 West
Trident Development - Senior Apartment Housing Proposal

Budgeted Amount:	Actual Amount:	Funding Source:
N/A	N/A	N/A

Council Should Consider

Council should consider a request for a Concept Plan Review for a proposed 124 unit senior market rate apartment development on the northwest side of the North Heights Lutheran Church property at 1700 Highway 96 West. The Applicant is seeking feedback from the City Council on the concept plan in advance of the full submission which would include a land use application for items such as a Subdivision, Conditional Use Permit, Rezoning, and Planned Unit Development.

The Concept Plan Review process is an opportunity for the City Council to provide comments and questions regarding proposed developments. A concept review is considered advisory and is nonbinding to the City and Applicant (Section 1320.14, Subd 4 of the Zoning Code). No formal action can be taken at a Work Session. A formal application will be subject to the full review process, including a public hearing with Planning Commission and City Council review.

Background

Trident Development is proposing a 124 unit senior apartment development (apartments only, the proposed will not have an assisted living or memory care component) on the northwest side of the North Heights Lutheran Church property at 1700 Highway 96 West. Prior to this submission, the Applicant held a neighborhood meeting on July 29, 2021 in order to garner feedback from the adjacent landowners on the proposed site development. The Applicant has included a summary of the meeting comments as part of this submission. Public comments and questions were primarily regarding traffic, access, impacts on neighborhood (i.e. property values and Royal Hills Park), and noise.

In 2017 and 2018, the City Council considered two Concept Plan Review applications for the development of senior living housing which would have comprised of independent, assisted, and memory care units on this same property. Both of those concept proposals had the placement of the building on the south side of the property with the primary access to the site from Snelling Avenue north of the intersection with Royal Hills Drive. At that time, the Council expressed concerns about building height, massing, traffic, and the required property rezoning. Additionally, the Council provided direction that the northwest corner of the property should be considered for the development. The minutes from those two Work Sessions are included with this report as Attachments E and F. The former Applicant evaluated this site and determined that development would not be feasible due to the presence of several large wetlands and additional construction costs. In the end, the former Developer made the decision not to move forward with a formal land use application.

Most recently, the Applicant received City Council feedback on this proposal at a prior work session on February 22, 2022. At this work session, the City Council noted their support of the project but expressed concerns over building height, site access, stormwater management, and floor area ratio. The Council also encouraged the Applicant to investigate including affordable units and outdoor amenities in the proposal. Following this meeting, the Applicant applied for two Comprehensive Plan Amendments to Chapter 6, Land Use. The Applicant requested to change the future land use designation of approximately 10.75 acres in the northwest corner of the Subject Property to High Density Residential (HDR). The 30+/- acres of development land on the Subject Property remains guided as Public and Institutional (P/I). The Applicant also requested a Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment to Section 6.4.10 to increase the maximum housing unit density as part of a Planned Unit Development. The Planning Commission had concerns with traffic, access, noise, neighborhood character, and the potential for additional high density units in this neighborhood and recommended denial by a 5-1 vote. Both Comprehensive Plan Amendments were approved and adopted as requested by the City Council on July 11, 2022.

Discussion

Existing Conditions

North Heights Lutheran Church owns the approximately 41 acre parcel with an address of 1700 Highway 96 West located on the south side of Highway 96 and directly east of U.S. Highway 10. The church chapel and education wing are located roughly in the center of the property. The chapel of the North Heights Lutheran Church was constructed in 1986 and the education wing was completed in 1998. Two large surface parking areas are located on the north and east side of the chapel and educational wing. The remainder of the site is wooded and includes wetland areas and stormwater infrastructure required for the existing development.

Aerial Map of Subject Property



The principal access to the site is from Highway 96 between Snelling Avenue and U.S. Highway 10. This access point is directly south of where the main roadway on the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) redevelopment site will be constructed. A secondary access is located in the northeast corner of the site on Snelling Avenue. As part of the original approval for the church campus, the City required that no right turns be permitted out of the Snelling Avenue driveway so as to direct traffic to the north. Currently, the main entrance and the Snelling Avenue intersection with Highway 96 are not signalized. A signal is planned for the North Heights entrance with the construction of the main TCAAP roadway.

The majority of the property is zoned R-1, Single Family Residential District. Approximately 6 acres of land at the northwest corner of the site adjacent to the Highway 96 and U.S. Highway 10 interchange is zoned B-1, Limited Business District. The property is also within 1,000 feet of Round Lake and would be subject to applicable Shoreland regulations. The Subject Property is guided for High Density Residential and Public and Institutional uses in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. In terms of the surrounding area, the 427-acre TCAAP redevelopment site is located north of the property across Highway 96, and there are primarily single family residential neighborhoods to the east and west. Royal Hills Park borders the property to the south.

	North Heights Property	North	South	East	West
Zoning	R-1 (35 acres) B-1 (6 acres) Shoreland	TRC – Flex Office, Retail Mixed Use	Parks and Open Space	R-1	R-1
Future Land Use	High Density Residential (+/- 10.75 acres) Public &	Flex Office, Retail Mixed Use (TCAAP)	Parks and Open Space	Low Density Residential, Very Low Density	Low Density Residential

	Institutional (+/- 30 acres)			Residential	
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Concept Plan Proposal

For this project, Trident Development, LLC would be the Developer and project manager, and LifeSpark Senior Living would be the long-term operator of the project. Both are stated to have a number of years of professional experience for development within this marketplace and would be ownership partners for this project. Trident Development has a mixed unit senior living facility recently completed in Arden Hills called Round Lake Senior Living at 1740 Parkshore Drive.

Trident Development is proposing to subdivide and purchase 10.75 acres in the northwest corner from North Heights Lutheran Church. This parcel would be developed with a 124 unit, age restricted 55+ senior independent living apartment building. The units would be targeted at market-rate featuring high-end amenities. The building is proposed to be 3-story with a pitched roof design estimated to be a height of 44’ from the highest roof peak. The principal exterior materials on the building would be stone, lap siding, and board & batten siding. Elements of architectural design have been included to enhance the exterior appearance such as a series of dormers, together with a variation of bump-outs. Other amenities to the apartment community will include an outdoor patio and grill area, rooftop sky lounge with outdoor fireplace, fitness center, and walking paths. Unit sizes will range from 750 - 850 square feet +/- for a one bedroom apartment, 950 – 1,200 square feet +/- for two bedrooms, and then 1,450 square feet for a three bedroom unit. The proposed unit sizes exceed the minimum requirements for multi-family dwellings which are:

- One-bedroom units shall be a minimum of seven hundred (700) square feet
- Two-bedroom units shall be a minimum of nine hundred and fifty (950) square feet

At the February 22, 2022 City Council Work Session, the Applicant provided further details on the proposed project. He discussed how the parking would be restriped and added to in order to keep the church use in compliance. He noted a pedestrian trail would meander along the west side of the building and would connect to a fire lane at the rear portion of the building. He stated the building would have an underground parking structure and commented on how the apartment traffic would not conflict with church traffic. He finally detailed the exterior building materials that would be used on the structure which included vinyl windows, powder coated balconies, brick and LP siding.

For new development in residential zoning districts, the city code does not reference a requirement for a percentage of preferred materials to be used in the building design similar to the business zoning districts. However, the City Council is directed in Section 1325.05 – Design Standards, Subd. 6, for Aesthetics to evaluate the impacts on surrounding area due to the proposed design, scale, massing, materials, height and other aspects of the subject matter as to whether the appearance will cause a substantial depreciation in the property values in the surrounding area or to unreasonable detract from the appearance of the area or the city as a whole.

Viewpoint facing North



Viewpoint facing Southeast



The proposed senior apartment building would trigger requests for rezoning from B-1, Limited Business and R-1, Single Family Residential to R-4, Multiple Dwelling District. On July 11, 2022, a Comprehensive Plan Amendment was approved to re-guide 10.75 acres of the Subject Property from Public and Institutional to HDR, High Density Residential. The maximum density allowed within the R-4 District and HDR District is 12 units per acre. As their development plans are finalized, Staff would verify as part of a future land use application that the newly created lot and total number of units complies with the maximum density requirements or a request for flexibility would be required as part of the PUD. Based on the concept review plans, the proposed development would have a net density of 14 units per acre.

Land Use	Site Acreage	Wetland Area	Net Acreage	Proposed Density	Proposed Density Per Acre 124 units/8.29 acres = 14.95
HDR	10.75	2.46	8.29	124	14

The building will include 1-story of underground parking that would be sufficient for approximately 124 units with an additional 105 surface parking spaces as shown on the site plan submitted. The table included in their narrative based on an approximate breakdown of units by number of bedrooms indicates that they would need to establish between 178 – 215 parking

spaces. City Code for off-street parking requirements would be 1.1 parking stall per efficiency and 1 bedroom units, and 2 parking stalls for each 2+ bedroom units. Furthermore, Section 1325.045 for Multi-family Dwelling Units Additional Conditional Use Permit Criteria states that “A minimum of one enclosed parking stall shall be provided per dwelling unit. Enclosed parking structures shall be attached to at least one of the principal structures to which parking is being provided.” At this stage in the concept plans, the Applicant has indicated that the unit count and parking space requirements would still subject to change. They have expressed an intent to comply with the minimum requirements if the project moves forward.

The surface parking will be located on the east side of the building with curbing and landscaping around the perimeter to create a separation of parking areas from the existing North Heights Lutheran Church parking. The underground parking and surface parking each have one primary access point that is intended to direct traffic towards Highway 96. The Applicant has shown in the renderings that the access points will be identified as “Left Turn Only” with signage showing “No Right Turn” movements to reinforce traffic patterns towards Highway 96. A turnaround fire access lane is shown around the rear of the building for emergency service needs.

Lastly in review of the proposed senior apartment building, City Code Section 1325.045 includes additional criteria that would be evaluated as part of the Conditional Use Permit review such as a lighting plan, security plan, and bicycle parking. With the intent of this application only to seek initial feedback from the Council on the proposed concept, the Applicant has not finalized all of these items at this stage in their development planning. The Applicant would be required to submit all of the requirements as referenced in this section as part of a future land use application for a CUP.

Trident Development has provided a preliminary site plan, building elevations, interior floor plans, a wetland delineation, and 3D conceptual renderings of the building from various viewpoints. A Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change designation of development site from Public and Institutional to High Density Residential was approved. Based on an initial review, staff believes the proposal would require the following land use requests:

- Preliminary Plat and Final Plat for Subdivision
- Vacation of Easements (i.e. drainage/wetland)
- Rezoning of the development site from B-1, Limited Business and R-1 – Single-Family Residential District to R-4 – Multiple Dwelling District
- Conditional Use Permit for Multiple Family Dwelling in the R-4 District
- Planned Unit Development for performance standard flexibility (Applicant’s narrative indicates a request for FAR and building height)

The table below provides the performance standards for the R-4 District, Shoreland Regulations and the preliminary analysis for the proposed development:

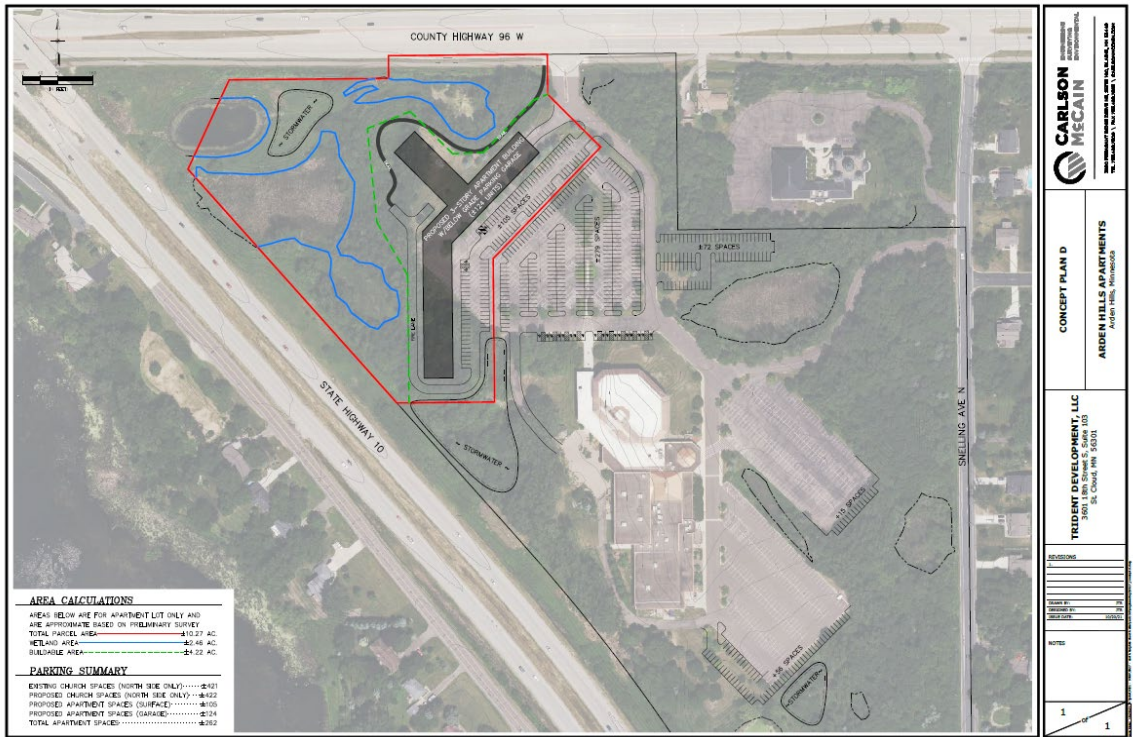
	R-4 District Standards	Shoreland District	Trident Development Proposal
Minimum Lot Area per Unit	3,630 s.f./unit	11,000 s.f./unit	Approximately 3,776 s.f./124 unit
Maximum Building Height	35 feet	35 feet	Approximate 39 feet – 43 feet
Maximum Floor Area Ratio	0.3	N/A	0.3645
Maximum Structure Coverage	25% of lot area	N/A	12.15%

Minimum Landscape Lot Area	65% of lot area	65% of lot area	Not specified, but not seeking flexibility
Maximum PUD Density	12 units/acre	N/A	14.95 units/acre (124)
Minimum Front Yard Setback	40 feet	Defaults to R-4 as nonriparian lot	To be verified as part of future land use application
Minimum Rear Yard Setback	30 feet	Defaults to R-4 as nonriparian lot	To be verified as part of future land use application
Minimum Side Yard Setback	5 feet (min)/15 feet (total)	Defaults to R-4 as nonriparian lot	To be verified as part of future land use application
Off-Street Parking	1.1 stall/1 bedroom 2 stall/2+ bedroom CUP 1 enclosed/unit	N/A	124 +/- enclosed 105 +/- surface Flexibility would not be requested

Stormwater & Wetlands

The Applicant has stated as part of the site grading that a stormwater retention pond will be created on the south side of the proposed development. Additionally, they anticipate there may be the need to construct an underground retention system due to space constraints of the site. At this time, the Applicant has indicated no other details are known on the scope of this work, but as the project progresses they will develop those engineered plans for the City Engineer to review.

As noted above, the Concept Review submittal documents included a Wetland Delineation Report. Similarly, to stormwater management, the Applicant has indicated they are working through the logistics of the location of existing wetlands and impacts to placement of site development. They've identified from the wetland delineation that the existing drainage/wetland easements are no longer in alignment with actual wetlands. The Applicant recognizes that if they decide to move forward with the project that existing easements will need to be vacated and new easements shall be dedicated as part of the platting process.



Traffic Analysis

For the Concept Review submittal, the Applicant has not included a traffic study for the proposed project area. From their neighborhood meeting held in July 2021, the proposed use from standard market apartments has shifted to age-restricted senior apartments. The Applicant indicates this age-restricted demographic change will result in a reduced quantity of new apartment residents with jobs which means an overall reduction in vehicular trip generation, and reduced peak AM/PM trip generation. The Applicant would be required as part of the full submission to include a traffic study in order for the application to be considered complete for City Council consideration.

Budget Impact

N/A

Attachments

- A. Project Narrative
- B. Preliminary Development Plans and Renderings
- C. Neighborhood Meeting Summary
- D. Wetland Delineation
- E. WS Minutes March 20, 2017
- F. WS Minutes May 21, 2018
- G. WS Minutes February 22, 2022
- H. Presentation