

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION #2021-017

A RESOLUTION BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA, APPROVING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR THE
PERIMETER TRANSITION AREA FOR THE ST. OLAF COLLEGE OLE AVENUE
HOUSING PROJECT

- WHEREAS, the applicant, St. Olaf College, seeks a Conditional Use Permit pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, Sec. 8.5.9, to allow a 300-bed residential hall, townhouse-style residences with 140 student beds, 189 additional parking stalls, green space, and other improvements to be constructed on the north and south sides of St. Olaf Avenue, which is zoned College Development (CD-S); and
- WHEREAS, the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA), pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, Sec. 2.4.2, is defined as an area inside the CD-S district that is within 200 feet of the boundary of the CD-S district; and
- WHEREAS, the PTA shall be measured from the midpoint of public rights-of-way adjoining the edge of college properties; and
- WHEREAS, PTA procedures and standards shall be applicable where the PTA adjoins all districts except areas zoned agricultural and industrial; and
- WHEREAS, the above-referenced property owned by St. Olaf College and subject to the Conditional Use Permit is legally described and depicted in the certificate of survey on Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference (the "Property"); and
- WHEREAS, the Planning Commission reviewed the proposal at its November 19, 2020 meeting and recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit with the conditions in the staff memo plus the condition that new parking of 28 parking stalls be removed from the site plan; and
- WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on November 19, 2020, and received public testimony regarding the proposed Conditional Use Permit; and
- WHEREAS, all required notices regarding the above-referenced public hearing were properly made; and
- WHEREAS, the Planning Commission found that the application meets the standards in the Land Development Code for conditional use, but does not meets the standard to allow the 28 new parking stalls; and
- WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed and recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit with the conditions that: the final plan will include a safe pedestrian connection from the north parking lot to the townhomes and athletic fields; the final plan will incorporate adequate apparatus access and turn around for fire and emergency safety vehicles and personnel; this project is subject to other City approvals, including site plan, which could result in required

modifications; and that the new parking of 28 parking stalls be removed from the site plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Council reviewed the requested Conditional Use Permit and Planning Commission recommendation and conditions for the requested Conditional Use Permit at its meeting of February 16, 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL THAT:

1. The Planning Commission's findings from its November 19, 2020 meeting are hereby adopted and attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit B.
2. Except as provided in the below conditions, the Conditional Use Permit to allow a 300-bed residential hall, townhouse-style residences with 140 student beds, green space, and other improvements on the Property located on the north and south of St. Olaf Avenue owned by St. Olaf College, which is zoned College Development (CD-S), legally described in Exhibit A, is hereby approved, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The Conditional Use Permit shall be recorded by the applicant at the applicant's expense within 180 days of the approval hereof. Failure to timely meet this condition shall render the Conditional Use Permit null and void and of no further force or effect;
 - b. The final site plan, subject to approval of the City, will include a safe pedestrian connection from the north parking lot to the townhomes and athletic fields;
 - c. The final site plan, subject to approval of the City, will incorporate adequate apparatus access and turn around for fire and emergency safety vehicles and personnel; and
 - d. This project is subject to other City approvals pursuant to City Code, including but not limited to site plan approval, which could result in additional required project modifications.
 - e. New parking of 28 parking stalls shall be removed from the site plan reducing the additional parking stalls from 189 to 161.
3. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 463.3595, a certified copy of this Conditional Use Permit shall be recorded with the county recorder or registrar of titles for Rice County

PASSED by the City Council of the City of Northfield on this 16th day of February, 2021.

ATTEST

City Clerk

Mayor

VOTE: ___ POWNELL ___ GRABAU ___ NAKASIAN ___ NESS
 ___ PETERSON WHITE ___ REISTER ___ ZUCCOLOTTO

EXHIBIT A

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Those parts of Lots 9 and 10 in the STATE SUBDIVISION OF THE SW 1/4 OF SECTION 36, TOWNSHIP 112 NORTH, RANGE 20 WEST OF THE FIFTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE CITY OF NORTHFIELD, and Rice County, Minnesota described as follows: Beginning at the southeast corner of said Lot 10; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, assumed bearing, along the south line of said Lot 10, 297.00 feet; thence North 00 degrees 51 minutes 34 seconds East, 200.03 feet; thence North 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds East, 327.97 feet; thence North 00 degrees 51 minutes 34 seconds East, 339.06 feet; thence South 89 degrees 08 minutes 54 seconds East, 331.55 feet; thence South 00 degrees 48 minutes 47 seconds West, 21.09 feet; thence North 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds East, 64.13 feet; thence North 00 degrees 48 minutes 21 seconds East, 169.57 feet; thence South 89 degrees 11 minutes 39 seconds East, 200.00 feet to the centerline of Lincoln Street South; thence South 00 degrees 48 minutes 21 seconds West, along said centerline, 366.53 feet; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, 264.31 feet; thence North 00 degrees 48 minutes 47 seconds East, 21.12 feet; thence North 89 degrees 08 minutes 30 seconds West, 131.58 feet; thence South 00 degrees 51 minutes 34 seconds West, 335.87 feet to its intersection with a line bearing North 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds East from the point of beginning; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, along the south line of said Lot 9, 231.00 feet to the point of beginning.

AND

Those parts of Lots 4 and Lot 5, Block 4 and Block 5, CUTLER'S ADDITION TO THE CITY OF NORTHFIELD, Rice County, Minnesota described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the northerly extension of the west line of said Lot 5, Block 4 and the centerline of St. Olaf Avenue; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, along said centerline of St. Olaf Avenue, 54.36 feet; thence South 00 degrees 51 minutes 34 seconds West, parallel with the west line of said Lot 5 and the west line of said Block 5, 563.90 feet; thence North 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds East, 681.58 feet to the centerline of Lincoln Street South; thence North 00 degrees 48 minutes 21 seconds East, along said centerline of Lincoln Street South, 200.02 feet to the centerline of 1st Street West; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, along said centerline of 1st Street West, 481.56 feet to the intersection with the westerly line of the East 448.50 feet of said Block 5 and the southerly extension of the westerly line of BLOCK TWO, VIKING COURT ADDITION NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA; thence North 00 degrees 48 minutes 21 seconds East, along said westerly line of the East 448.50 feet of Block 5 and the west line of BLOCK TWO, VIKING COURT ADDITION NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA, 165.00 feet to the north line of said BLOCK TWO, VIKING COURT ADDITION NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA; thence continuing North 00 degrees 48 minutes 21 seconds East, along the northerly extension of the westerly line of BLOCK TWO, VIKING COURT ADDITION NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA, 198.87 feet to the centerline of St. Olaf Avenue; thence South 89 degrees 55 minutes 44 seconds West, along said centerline, 145.66 feet to the point of beginning.

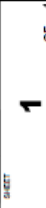
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EXHIBIT B

FINDINGS

Conditional Use Permit Analysis:

The St. Olaf project area encompasses areas currently zoned CD-S, as well as areas zoned R1 that are being considered for re-zoning to the CD-S district to facilitate expansion of the Campus on properties owned by the College. As stated above, development in the PTA requires a CUP. A CUP follows the Type 4 Review Procedure found in Section 5.4.7 of the LDC. When reviewing a CUP, the Planning Commission is to consider the following criteria (Criterion a) must be met and b) through n) shall be considered):

a) The proposed use is allowed as a conditional use in the district for which it is proposed.

Concurrent with this application, a request to rezone a portion of the project area from R1-B to CD-S is being considered. When reviewing the project under the CD-S, the proposed uses are permitted, and those within the PTA are allowed as a conditional use.

b) The conditional use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the city's comprehensive plan and this LDC.

The Ole Student Housing Project upholds the objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan in the following categories:

Chapter 3: Community Identity – Objective 7: Continue to support local schools and colleges

CI 7.2 “Cooperate with the local colleges to minimize negative impacts of parking and traffic on Northfield neighborhoods.”

- The approval criterion is not only about levels of service; the criterion is that a project “minimize negative impacts” from traffic. Building new parking at the base of the Hill, closer to downtown, and out students’ back door, will: increase student likelihood of making trips by car rather than by other modes; put those trips on St. Olaf Avenue; and move existing trips from the highway to the neighborhood. Not building un-needed parking there would implement the LDC by genuinely “minimize[ing] negative impacts of parking and traffic” from substantial new student housing at the edge of a residential neighborhood.
- Most student parking is currently hard to access. The proposed new lot will allow students who previously had to walk down to the lot by Skoglund to get a car, to instead be able to walk out their back door to get it. All the relevant literature in the transportation field says that this new parking lot will produce a decrease in bus use, and an increase in auto use. That increase will then be primarily on St. Olaf Avenue.

CI 7.3 “Collaborate with the local colleges to provide the overall community with quality public programs, and quality open spaces.”

- The site plan incorporates thoughtful open space and pedestrian connections around the proposed residences. The outdoor spaces will include intentional

landscape design and spaces for people to gather and enjoy the continued collegiate ambiance that already exists on the St. Olaf campus.

Chapter 4: Land use – Objective 3: Encourage a compact development pattern, and support infill, redevelopment and land intensification.

LU 3.2 “Work collaboratively to identify structures and sites for redevelopment, intensification or reuse.”

- The college commissioned a housing study and found that redevelopment of the President’s House and Honor’s Homes would be the best option for increasing on-site residential opportunities to meet the needs of the student population.

In addition, the Framework Map of the Northfield Comprehensive Plan delineates the parcels as appropriate for Neighborhood Central. This zone consists of single-family homes on smaller lots and includes some multi-family and mixed-use development. Walkability is a strong component and a range of housing types. The Comprehensive Plan explains this zone also begins to change at the edge of this zone. The edges change from an urban square grid to suburban style development and start to lose consistency with square blocks. Future development should be reinforced by the character of the Neighborhood Central zone. The character of the proposed buildings, sidewalk connection and landscaping reflect a transition from neighborhood to campus, and support the values of the Neighborhood Central zone.

The proposal will need to meet the Site Development Standards for the CD-S Zone District as defined in Article 3 of the LDC and the Use Specific Standards found in Article 2. Staff will complete a final review after the CUP process has been completed, and will incorporate any conditions added to the PTA zone by City Council.

- c) **The conditional use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area.**

The architecture of the proposed residential hall and townhouse-style residences is designed to complement St. Olaf structures and design. The quality of materials, design, colors and aesthetics are intended to create visual continuity with existing campus buildings. Intentional design adds permanence and contributes to harmony with the existing character of the college campus. The new campus residences will also be operated and managed similarly to the existing student housing to ensure the students abide by campus policies and respect the surrounding neighborhoods.

- d) **The conditional use will not be hazardous or reasonably disturbing to existing or future uses.**

The proposed residential facilities will not pose any hazardous or disruptive conditions to existing or future neighboring uses. The new facilities will serve the needs of the college and help contain students on campus to reduce off-campus parking and housing needs. Landscaping design integrates placement of plantings and species selection that will soften light-shed and balance the need for safety and security.

- e) **The conditional use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewer.**

The residence hall and townhouses will front the existing St. Olaf Avenue, which would be preserved as a main connection from Lincoln Street North into the St. Olaf campus. Most of the proposed parking would be between the townhouses and the existing stadium with access from Lincoln Street North.

The residential facilities would connect to public water and sewer, and there is adequate capacity for the increased residential usage. The project area consists of an existing looped watermain a portion of which will be rerouted in order to accommodate the construction of the residence hall. If necessary for additional flow or pressure, booster pumps will be installed to adequately meet the needs of the residence hall. Sanitary sewer mains are available for connection in both St Olaf Avenue and 1st Street West so no downstream capacity issues are anticipated due to the construction of this project.

The Ole Avenue project will also involve construction of stormwater detention on-site and release into the municipal storm sewer system at the same or a lesser rate. Stormwater treatment of the runoff will also be provided on-site to ensure all State and Local requirements are met. Based on this information, existing municipal utilities are adequate to meet the requirements of the proposed student housing project.

Public facilities details and final design is subject to technical review and will be part of the final site plan and project approval.

- f) **The benefits of the conditional use outweigh the potential negative effects of the surrounding community.**

The proposed project is the result of a 2018 housing study commission by St. Olaf College's Board of Regents. In this study, it was determined there is a 462-bed deficit in available on-campus student housing. To accommodate this need in the interim, the collage has converted study lounges into rooms and added beds to double rooms. There has also been an increased need for students to procure off-campus housing options, resulting in more students driving to/from campus and potentially parking along streets in adjacent neighborhoods.

By providing additional on-site housing and parking, the overcrowding in existing residential facilities and off-campus demands can be resolved. This would help reduce off-campus housing needs and the resulting vehicular trips by those students to/from campus each day would be reduced accordingly. In addition, the proposal provides an additional 188 on-campus parking stalls to capture the parking needs of increased on-campus residential units and to accommodate students who travel off-site for additional skills development and work experience.

- g) The conditional use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services.**

All utility connections proposed will be constructed at the cost of the college as part of this project. No public cost will be incurred during construction of this project.

- h) The conditional use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors.**

This development is not expected to result in operations that would be detrimental to any persons, property or general welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors.

- i) The conditional use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features.**

The conditional use is not expected to result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features. Since the proposed project will take place in a previously developed area largely encompassing existing residential homes, no disruption of natural or scenic features are anticipated. St. Olaf will also be preserving many of the existing on-site trees. In addition, none of the existing structures proposed for decommissioning are listed on the National Historic Register or are subject to other state or local historic designations.

- j) The traffic and parking generated by the use will not lower the Levels of Services as described in the comprehensive plan update of intersections within a quarter mile of the site.**

A traffic study was performed to analyze the impacts of the proposed project. It showed that some new/additional traffic to and from the campus would occur, but mostly existing traffic redistribution is expected to occur. The redistribution is expected to have minimal impacts to the adjacent public roadway network based on the conclusions of the traffic study. Essentially, students are already present on campus and commuting to campus from elsewhere in the community. The same students would be living on campus and no longer commuting, thereby decreasing the overall number of daily student trips to and from campus. Further, minimal changes in Level of Service (positive and negative) at the Lincoln Street/St. Olaf Avenue intersection or the Highway 19/St. Olaf Drive intersection are anticipated as a result of the project.

- k) In residential districts, the use is of a similar height, building orientation, massing, setback, and scale as to be compatible with surrounding uses in compliance with Section 3.5 Neighborhood Compatibility Standards.**

The use is proposed in the CD-S district and reflect design and massing expected on a college/institutional campus.

- l) In the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA) within the college development district (CD-S) that abut residential and commercial districts, height, building orientation, massing, setback and scale shall be considered in building renovation and/or new construction in order to maintain compatibility with surrounding areas as described in Section 3.4 Neighborhood Compatibility Standards. These neighborhood compatibility stands are to be administered in order to maintain a harmonious neighborhood environment and absolute compliance with these standards is not intended.**

The proposed housing project abuts several residential lots, most of which are owned by St. Olaf College. In the PTA area the building height, orientation, massing, setback and scale have been considered in relation to the neighborhood. The height of the townhomes (at roof mid-line) is approximately 30 feet, which is the maximum height of homes in the R1 district. In addition, the facades of the townhomes have variation in depth, color, texture and exterior finishes. The townhomes are oriented towards the street and have sidewalk connections throughout and to the street.

The residence hall height ranges from 45 – 60 feet in height. This is higher than what is typically seen in the R1 zone, though multi-family buildings are allowed to exceed the 30 foot maximum if for every additional 10 feet in height the building is setback 5 feet from adjacent buildings and lot lines. The proposed residence halls are similar to the height of other campus housing. These structures will have facades that wrap around a courtyard. The halls also have façades that differ in depths, color and exterior finishes that help integrate it into the campus-neighborhood context, and are in keeping with the college architecture. The halls orient toward the street with connections through the courtyard and sidewalks.

- m) Impacts such as noise, hours of activity, and outdoor lighting have been addressed to mitigate negative impacts on nearby uses.**

The residential facilities, walkways, and parking lots will incorporate outdoor lighting to comply with the 2.0 average maximum foot-candle requirement, and a 0.1 foot-candle for any lights within 15-feet to adjacent residential uses. The lighting placement and fixtures selected are intended to provide a safe night atmosphere without creating light pollution, and to use lighting as a design enhancement rather than a distraction. Landscape design and species selection is intended to soften and interrupt light-shed while balancing the need for safety and security.

The students will be expected to comply with the campus guidelines within residential facilities, which includes maintaining noise levels and hours of activity that are not a nuisance to other students or adjacent neighbors. Additionally, the attending Residential Advisor living in the residential facilities is planned to be present to help enforce the campus policies.

n) Parking is adequately provided for the proposed conditional use, but an excessive number of parking spaces are not proposed.

St. Olaf meets CD-S parking requirements for the proposed new development, plus anticipated growth, with existing parking. The parking component of the proposed development would constitute “an excessive number of parking spaces”. The Approval Criteria’s requirement that a use not create “an excessive number of parking spaces” responds to the numerous negative impacts of parking lots, and implements a wide variety of City goals and policies.