Conditional Use Permit Analysis

1. Approval Criterion (n): parking

Staff memo does not quote the full approval criterion (n). The full sentence reads:

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

a. Analysis

From the St. Olaf Parking Study:

> If St. Olaf College provided 1 parking stall per each student vehicle, faculty member, and staff member, that would require a total of approximately 1,680 parking stalls (850 student vehicles and 820-830 faculty/staff). Across campus there are 1,829 permitted parking stalls (excluding loading parking stalls), 270 overflow visitor stalls, and 200 off-campus stalls within the adjacent residential neighborhood. The number of permitted parking stalls (excluding loading parking stalls) exceeds the number of required parking stall per the City's land use plan."

1,829 existing stalls - 1,680 currently required stalls = 149 more existing stalls than required.

According to St. Olaf documents, the new housing will accommodate some students who currently live elsewhere on-campus (and thus create no new parking need) and 175 students now off-campus.

> The 175 students who live off-campus would be able to live on-campus, and assuming the current rate of issuing parking permits is maintained (27% of on campus students), about 48 additional stalls would be required.

That is, if all of St. Olaf's commitments to non-auto transportation have no effect, those 175 new on-campus students will request 48 stalls. Those 48 stalls are currently available.

St. Olaf documents also refer to a need to absorb growth in enrollment. If the new parking is for expected growth in enrollment, we can do the following calculation:

> Current enrollment: 3,050 * Olaf-expected annual growth: 0.4%/year = 12 new students per year

At an average parking permit request rate of 27%, that is a growth in permit requests of

> 12 new students * 27% request rate = 3.3 new permits/ year.

Of the current 149 surplus parking stalls, if the new housing absorbs 48, then 101 current stalls remain to absorb future enrollment growth.

101 existing surplus stalls/3.3 stalls/year = existing parking stalls contain 30 years of growth capacity.

b. Conclusion

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", contrary to the Approval Criteria.

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.

Further: Olaf will/ is:

> - Looking into the possibility of buses being equipped with GPS tracking features to allow transit riders to track buses in real time online or on their mobile devices. This would lead to a more convenient and pleasant transit experience that can increase ridership.
>
> - Installing transit shelters on-campus at frequent stops to protect riders from wind and precipitation while they wait for buses. Transit shelters also offer an opportunity to coordinate shelter design with campus branding, wayfinding, signage, and security features.
>
> - Providing a school resource for ridesharing for faculty, staff, and students.
>
> - Constructing bike-lanes within existing roadways to reduce bicycle traffic on walkways or construct shared-use paths.
>
> - Educate students, faculty, staff, and visitors on the availability of Lyft throughout the Northfield area and Uber in part of Northfield.

These efforts will further reduce the number of stalls that students request, reinforcing the fact that new stall are not needed.

2. ***Approval Criterion: minimize negative impacts of parking and traffic***

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

a. Analysis

Traffic Study, p. 12:

> "Because of this, is assumed most student traffic will be traveling on Hwy 19 Blvd to either travel towards the center of the City of Northfield or towards I-35."

No basis given for this assumption. Most people who start out on Olaf Avenue, continue on Olaf Avenue.

> "Rather, the existing transit system, particularly the local buses, may experience increased use as more students take advantage of the bus rather than vehicles to travel to points of interest within the City of Northfield."

Document gives no basis for assertion. 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.

Traffic Study, p. 15, on crashes at St. Olaf Avenue and Highway 3:

> "Between 2015 and June of 2020 there have been no type K or A crashes, 1 type B crash, 2 type C crashes, and 2 property damage only crashes (type N)."

Summary: an average of a crash per year. Additional traffic on Saint Olaf Avenue will not cross any thresholds, but will certainly send more student traffic through this intersection, which doesn't work particularly well.

Traffic Study, p. 17

> Rather than using the intersection of Hwy 19 Blvd and St. Olaf Drive to access campus, more students are expected to use the intersection of Lincoln Street N and St. Olaf Avenue. This traffic will utilize St. Olaf Avenue to access a new student parking lot.

Agree.

> The redistribution of traffic expected as a result of the proposed traffic is expected to decrease entering traffic at the intersection of Hwy 19 Blvd and St. Olaf Drive. In return, the redistribution of traffic is expected to increase entering traffic at the intersection of Lincoln Street N and St. Olaf Avenue."

Agree. In other words, the new parking lot will move student traffic off of the highway, and on to neighborhood streets. That is contrary to the goal of the LDC.

b. Conclusion

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.

Resolution

Given the forgoing analysis, the Planning Commission finds that the new parking proposed as part of the CUP:

1. Is not necessary

2. Is in conflict with Approval Criterion (n)

3. Is in conflict with Approval Criterion (b), especially CI 7.2 “Cooperate with the local colleges to minimize negative impacts of parking and traffic on Northfield neighborhoods.”

Therefore, the Planning Commission:

1. Approves the CUP with the condition that the new parking be removed from the project.

2. Recommends that the City Council approve the CUP only if the proposed new parking stalls are removed.

3. Sends this recommendation to the City Council with accompanying analysis.