



Legislation Text

File #: Ord. 1019, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: January 5, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner
Mitzi Baker, Community Development Director

Consideration of an Ordinance Rezoning Several Parcels as part of the St. Olaf College - Ole Avenue Housing Project from R1-B: Low Density Residential to CD-S: College Development.

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council is asked to give the second reading of the ordinance requesting the rezoning of the following parcels (2236351032, 2236351031, 2236325003, 2236325004, 2236325005, 2236325006, 2236325007, 2236325008, 2236325009), located west of Lincoln St. N., on both the North and South sides of St. Olaf Ave., from R1-B: Low Density Residential to CD-S: College Development to facilitate the proposed Ole Avenue Student Housing Project.

The Planning Commission and Staff recommend the City Council approve a Zoning Map Amendment for the above parcels to be rezoned from R1-B: Low Density Residential to CD-S: College Development.

Summary Report:

The parcels are located west of Lincoln Street North on the north and south sides of St. Olaf Avenue. The Framework Map of the Northfield Comprehensive Plan delineates the parcels to be rezoned as 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 goes on to state the Neighborhood Central zone begins to transition at its edges. 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 rezoning of these parcels will be one step in the process for the proposed Ole Avenue Student Housing project. The project involves a new 300-bed residential hall to be constructed on the south side of St. Olaf Avenue on the current site of the President's House as well as townhouse-style residences with 140 student beds to replace existing honor houses on the north side of St. Olaf Avenue. The design also includes 188 additional parking stalls, green space and other improvements.

On November 19, 2020, the Planning Commission considered the rezone request. Commissioner Buckheit offered further analysis on the rezoning of the parcels and is attached to this staff report for informational purposes. A rezoning does not allow for conditions to be imposed, it is either an approval or denial process. Discussion from the Planning Commission included higher level zoning issues and how the colleges purchase land, which in turn gives the owner the right to request a zone change, but then the college development zone,

encroaches into neighborhoods. The Commission recommended approval of the zone change to the City Council.

The same parcels under consideration for rezoning have also been requested to consolidate to the large main campus parcel. The lot consolidation request is on consent agenda. Lot consolidations are typically on consent agenda and this is a separate action from the rezoning and CUP. Lots can be consolidated before a rezoning occurs and vice-versa.

The Council will review, as a discussion item, the Perimeter Transition Area as part of the CUP process at tonight's City Council meeting (January 5, 2021) as well. The CUP should not be voted on until the rezoning process is completed. If the second reading and summary ordinance are approved, the summary ordinance will be published in the Northfield News on January 13, 2021. After 30 days, the ordinance to change the zoning becomes official and then the Council can vote on the CUP. The CUP would then be brought to Council on February 16, 2021 for official action.

The parcels meet the approval criteria for a zoning map amendment listed in 8.5.14(C) of the Land Development Code (LDC). The proposed housing project will be given final review, by staff, of the Site Development Standards for the College Development zone District as defined in Article 3 of the LDC, Sec. 3.2.8 and any conditions set forth by the Condition Use Permit process.

Approval Criteria:

When reviewing a rezoning, the City Council is to consider several criteria as established in Article 8 of the Land Development Code (8.5.14.C). The Planning Commission and City Council shall review the necessary submittal requirements, facts, and circumstances of the proposed amendment and make a recommendation and decision on the application based on, but not limited to, consideration of the following criteria:

- (1) The specific policies, goals, objectives, and recommendations of the comprehensive plan and other city plans, including public facilities and the capital improvement plans.

The Framework Map of the Northfield Comprehensive Plan delineates the parcels to be rezoned as 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. The Comprehensive plan states future development should be reinforced by the existing character of the Neighborhood Central zone.

The Ole Avenue Student Housing Project supports 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 proposal includes 188 new on-site parking spaces to accommodate campus parking needs associated with the proposed project and minimize overflow into the adjacent neighborhoods. The number of proposed on-site parking spaces adhere to the City's parking standards for the proposed use, according to City Ordinance Chapter 34, Article 3, Section 3.6 Off-Street Parking Space Requirements, and more specifically, Tables 3.6-1 and 3.6-2 relevant to the parking requirements in the CD-S District.

- The traffic study demonstrated that the proposed on-site residences would not result in traffic increases, but rather a redistribution of existing traffic movement. Further, no change in level of service of the local roadway network, or specifically at the Lincoln Street/St. Olaf Avenue intersection or the Highway 19/St. Olaf Drive intersection, are expected as a result of the project.

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 informal 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, which found that redevelopment of the President’s House and the honor homes would be the best option for increasing on-site residential opportunities to meet the existing needs and demands of the student population. This would allow more students to live on campus rather than off campus, reducing the student impact to adjacent neighborhoods.
- The study found that the existing President’s House and honor homes would require a cost-prohibitive level of improvements to meet current building, fire, and safety code requirements as well as to meet the technology needs of 21st century students. The proposed Ole Avenue Student Housing Project will meet each of these needs to provide a thriving collegiate experience for students.

- (2) The purpose and intent of this LDC, or in the case of a map amendment, whether it meets the purpose and intent of the individual district.

The existing zoning is R1-B Low Density Residential District. The purpose of the R-1B district is to continue to support single-family, two-family, and three-family attached and detached dwellings within the existing character of the city's older neighborhoods. The current zoning does not permit the proposed uses of a residence hall or student townhomes.

The request to rezone the property to CD-S would allow college owned and utilized properties to be redeveloped to meet the student housing needs at the college. CD-S zoning is consistent with all property used for collegiate purposes and would be a continuation to the existing CD-S district currently directly adjacent to the parcels under consideration.

Development proposed in the PTA sub-zone is subject to development standards that are applicable to Conditional Use Permit (CUP) criteria and will be subject to a thorough public review and decision process using the Type 4 review procedure with a neighborhood meeting requirement. Concurrent to this rezoning request is a CUP application request to comply with the permitting requirements.

- (3) The adequacy of infrastructure available to serve the proposed action.

The properties are served by adequate public utilities for the proposed use, including existing water and sanitary sewer mains and adequate access for emergency vehicles.

Water Main Infrastructure

Evidence Provided: A looped watermain already exists within the project area; however, a portion will be required to be rerouted in order to accommodate the construction of the residence hall. If necessary to achieve additional flow or pressure, booster pumps will be installed to adequately meet the needs of the

residence hall.

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure

Evidence Provided: Sanitary sewer mains are available for connection in both St. Olaf Avenue and 1st Street West; therefore, no downstream capacity issues are anticipated due to the construction of this project.

Storm Sewer Facilities

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

Street Infrastructure

Evidence Provided: The project will tie into existing streets. No intersection, turn lane, or bypass lane improvements were determined necessary to maintain the level of service provided by the existing roadway. St. Olaf will however be replacing the section of street affected by utility connections in front of redeveloped property at applicant's expense.

- (4) The adequacy of a buffer or transition provided between potentially incompatible districts.

No buffering is required between College Development and Residential 1 zone per LDC Table 3.5-3. Buffering for parking lots is required and has been provided throughout the site per 3.5.8 Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements.

The subject parcels though, when developed, would be a continuation of the St. Olaf campus, integrated with streets, sidewalks, and architectural continuity. The other adjacent properties, mainly to the east and south, are single-family residential.

The project follows Zoning Ordinance requirements to provide appropriate setbacks and landscaping to ensure that the proposed student housing would be adequately buffered and transitioned to the single-family district.

In addition, the student housing was thoughtfully located on the western side of the parcels, closest to the campus to leave a larger buffer to the single-family homes. In addition, Lincoln Street North provides a natural separation between the campus and the single-family neighborhood to the east.

Alternative Options:

The City Council may approve or deny the request for rezoning with a two-thirds vote of all members of the Northfield City Council.

Financial Impacts:

There are no immediate financial impacts to the City.

Tentative Timelines:

January 5, 2021

- Council review, as a discussion item, of the Perimeter Transition Area as part of the CUP
- Vote on the second reading and summary ordinance for the rezoning request
- Lot consolidation on consent agenda

January 13, 2021

- Publication of the summary ordinance to the Northfield News (if second reading and summary ordinance are approved)
- After 30 days, (February 12, 2021) the ordinance to change the zoning becomes official

February 16, 2021

- CUP brought to Council for official action