

CALL TO ACTION

CITY COUNCIL

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Concern Citizens,

There is currently a development proposal for the south portion of the Miracle Mile. While there is much excitement about the Miracle Mile being redeveloped this project falls short in a few areas. Here are some notes about the project and the process thus far.

We encourage you to contact all the city council members as listed above. If you email the council, please also forward your email to Jesse Welsh who will compile all letters to be submitted to the city as part of the meeting packet. Ideally, letters should be sent by Wednesday October 12th, but Jesse will bring anything sent after that date. The city council will decide on this project at the October 17th meeting. There is only one council meeting to decide this project. **Your attendance and public testimony on the 17th will also be extremely helpful.** Whatever your views on the project, it is good for the council to hear from as many neighbors as possible.

Overview

1. The current proposal is for a six story mixed use development including a grocery store on the main floor and five levels of apartments above (107 apartments). The apartments have a courtyard on the 2nd story that opens up to Hwy 52. The parking for the apartments is underground.
2. The front of the grocery store is facing Hwy 52 much like the current Miracle Mile stores.
3. West Center Street will come through to the development in the new proposal but the intersection has a 15 degree offset (much like the intersection of 11th Ave and 1st St NW).
4. The signage is consistent with a very suburban style development.
5. The developer will likely be asking for \$2M in Tax Increment Financing from the City of Rochester (to be heard at a later date).
6. Here is the timeline and details on public engagement:
 - a. July 20 - Developer representative held a required development informational meeting
 - b. September 7 - Developer representative attended a special neighborhood meeting
 - c. September 9 - Planning staff recommend denial or continuation of the project
 - d. September 13 - Applicant amends project and planning staff changes their recommendation to approval
 - e. September 14 - Public hearing at the first planning and zoning commission meeting results in a continuation as commissioners felt they didn't have enough time to understand the late

changes; neighborhood spoke passionately about the desire to activate 16th Ave and not have the "back" to the neighborhood. Planning staff also says this will be a one-step final approval process rather than the regular restricted development two-step approval.

- f. September 23 - Developer representative was let go from the project; no new name was given to the application and it has continued forward as an LLC
- g. September 28 - City attorney told the planning and zoning commission they would not be allowed to take public comment at the continued hearing because they'd already closed the public hearing on the 14th prior to continuing (note: this is the first time the attorney has enforced this rule; the Alatus project took public comment following a continuation with no objection from city administration). As a result, the project was continued again to October 12 as the only way to allow for proper notice of a public hearing and testimony on the staff report changes that happened between the 14th and the 28th.
- h. October 7 - Notice of Public Hearing at City Council for October 17th was sent to the neighborhood. City Administration said it can be heard at Council without a recommendation from the planning commission.

Areas of Concern (as outlined in the KPNA letter for this project):

1. The proposed intersection at 16th Ave and West Center Street:

- a. The current alignment is offset so the streets do not line up. Though allowed up to 15 degrees, Kutzky Park residents have experience with this type of intersection at 11th Ave and 1st St NW and agree that it is unsafe for both pedestrian and vehicle crossings.

2. The 16th Ave façade of the building:

- a. There was almost unanimous dissatisfaction to the orientation of this project. Continuing to have the back to the neighborhood and St. Marys Place corridor is a loss for the revitalization of this area. Neighbors in attendance were excited about the reduction in blight and opportunity for mixed use density at this site, but feel the project fails engage the community. Between the DIM and KPNA meeting, the developer did add light panels along 16th, but neighbors did not feel this was adequate. At a minimum, many felt the residential units should open to the neighborhood, instead of the highway.
- b. This project falls within the boundary of the Second Street Corridor Study, and the top three objectives for redevelopment were:
 - i. Improve the safety, appearance and image of the 2nd Street Corridor;
 - ii. Create an attractive gateway to the city;
 - iii. Strengthen the vitality of the neighborhoods.

While this project removes the blight of the current project and moved the trash from the back side of the building, it fails to meet these top three priorities. If done right it could be a catalyst for further redevelopment along this corridor increasing the tax base to the city. As it is currently designed this project will do little to impact the surrounding area.

3. The design of 16th Ave:

- a. There is an opportunity with this project to incorporate safe multi-modal transportation and redesign the street in accordance with Rochester's Complete Streets policy. This should include on-street parking and protected bike lanes. The expansion of the sidewalk through this area is a great addition, but the safety and accessibility of intersections needs further consideration.

4. Pedestrian access from 2nd St SW.

- a. With the impending development of St. Marys Place and 2nd St SW, neighbors had questions about the accessibility of this project, specifically the main retail tenant, from the south. The current design requires that those walking approach the "back" service and garage side of the building. Some improvements were made to reduce the lanes of traffic pedestrians would be

required to cross, but improvements to the experience were minimal. The residential entrance on the SE corner could be redesigned to help improve this experience.

5. Parking, landscaping and photometric study:

- a. The design of the parking, particularly the access from the south presents challenges for this project. Angled parking in the aisle extension of Center Street and wider (12' min) sidewalks with street trees on the north and west sides of the building should be added. The project should be designed to support overstory trees, not small trees as the benefits of these trees far outweigh any perceived visual obstruction. There was a desire to reduce the south access points to two lanes.

6. TIF request:

- a. Neighbors in attendance were interested in knowing what the 2 million plus TIF request would be used for on this project. While it is reasonable for the developer to not have all the details of this element finalized at this point, the neighborhood felt very strongly that given the current design does not provide much public benefit; TIF is a very important part of the proposal. Burying the power lines should be a minimum requirement.

7. Process Issues:

- a. The owner has not sent anyone to meet with the neighborhood that has the ability to make decisions. Representatives from the developer have been present to take notes but neither the developer nor the architects have had meaningful conversation with the neighborhood.
- b. The last minute changes and loopholes used by city administration is a disservice to the overall process for developers looking to do business in Rochester. The city is rushing a project through for approvals despite lack of support from the neighborhood and the planning and zoning commission.