

**City of Duluth Planning Commission**  
**June 11, 2024**

Members present:

Jason Holliday, presiding.

Brian Hammone, Danielle Rhodes, Chris Adatte, and David Sarvela and Andrea Wedul.

Margie Nelson and Gary Eckenberg absent.

The meeting started promptly at 5pm. All materials from staff assessments and agenda were online ahead of the meeting.

Minutes were approved. There were no public comments on Agenda Items and all consent items were approved. One clarification was made in reference to a request for a variance for a rear yard deck about a buffer area from Tischer Creek. That was in place and approved.

The only item for **Public Hearing** was a variance request to build a warehouse by Sofidel, the new company that purchased the paper mill. They were requesting to build “up” on the warehouse to hold all the new paper products they will be producing. The height will be 152’ as it is the only option to increase warehouse space as they have no more usable land.

The new paper products will be from recycled fibers. They will not add any towers on the addition and will continue their “no odor” policy by continuing to use a different chemical process. The company is currently completing an environmental worksheet required by the city prior to construction. The variance was passed.

**Communications**

No meeting minutes from either the Historic Preservation Commission or the Airport Zoning Board. There is a new city permit software that has been installed and implemented. It is the same as the application in Superior. The hope is it will be easier for contractors moving between Superior and Duluth.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth Strom Mccutcheon

**City of Duluth Planning Commission**  
**May 15, 2024**

Members present:

Gary Eckenberg, Presiding

Brian Hammond, Danielle Rhodes, Chris Adatte, Jason Hollinday, Margie Nelson, and David Sarvela

The meeting started promptly at 5pm.

Members were attentive, courteous and appeared to have done their “homework”

Agenda was online in a timely fashion and Staff memos were attached to the agenda for each item.

Most significant action was final approval of the final Alternative Urban Areawide Review for the “Incline Village” a residential and retail development on the hilltop site of the former Central HS. Recommendations include directing the developer to adopt bird-safe construction techniques to reduce risk of bird strikes. The Commission noted the project should be eligible for tax-increment financing. This review took six months and the Commission agreed with the City Planner that the tool and process was useful and comprehensive.

Three items from the consent agenda were removed with discussion at the request from attending citizens. Two related to requested variances; one a shoreland setback variance and the other utility easement variance. After testimony and lengthy discussion both were approved as recommended by staff. The third was concern regarding the proposed Interim Use Permit for Interim Outdoor Living Site at Damiano parking lot. This outdoor living space is for people with cars to safely stay in them overnight from June 1-October 31. Trained monitors staff area, they also provide portable showers, restrooms and the lot is emptied before staff arrive to work. Concern expressed by Tribal owned building nearby regarding behavior of some clients in the past. After discussion, the item passed with the rationale that the temporary outdoor living site reduced offensive behavior last year and is a positive temporary solution with the ultimate goal of finding more permanent housing for these individuals.

Request for variance related to placement of garage to increase solar power generation. Request denied since it was decided there is adequate space on property to access sunlight in accordance with current code.

Request for variance to build an attached garage that will be in compliance if new codes, currently moving through the legislative process are approved. Request denied since current codes do not allow it.

Respectfully submitted  
Barbara Possin

**City of Duluth Planning Commission**  
**March 12, 2024**

Members present:

Margie Nelson, Gary Eckenberg, Brian Hammond, Danielle Rhodes, Michael Schraepfer, Jason Crawford, Jason Holliday. Absent Andrea Wedul

The meeting started at 5pm.

Members were attentive, courteous, and appeared well prepared.

Staff memos were attached to each agenda item.

Minutes of February 13, 2024 were approved.

Consent agenda items approved.

Public Hearing on Draft AUAR (Alternative urban Areawide Review) for the Central High School Redevelopment Project. (PL 24-127)

This was hearing only with comment period to end March 21, 2024

All comments with recommendations will be brought to the commission. Final approval will be made May 14, 2024

Comments from the public included concern that the proposed building would be a collision hazard to migrating birds since Duluth is a major migration pathway. The proposed building is in a pathway between Enger Park and Hawk Ridge and a speaker encouraged every possible mitigation strategy be taken. Detailed written comments forthcoming to the commission.

Other comments included concern that using methane producing appliances in multi-unit housing is dangerous, a health hazard, and will increase greenhouse gas emissions in Duluth by 4% and the speaker stated that 78% of emissions in Duluth come from buildings. He urged consideration of the environmental and public health impact.

Other business:

Rezone 4 acres from R-1 (Residential-Traditional) to R-P (Residential-Planned). (PL 24-011)  
Hawk Ridge neighborhood

City planning staff recommended this change with the rationale that it will provide a variety of housing types, including cottage and on-site amenities, and is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This includes allowing taller buildings up to 45 feet, which is 15 feet taller than current zoning allows. The proposed zoning change could allow up to 30 homes.

Staff reported that the public notification process was not properly followed. For this reason another public hearing will be held next month.

The developer who is from Seattle, WA was present to explain his plans and answer questions from members.

- Plan is still in formative concept stage.
- Does not feel that the height of buildings will interfere with view from Skyline Parkway
- Wants to offer flexible housing options.
- The parcels would be re-plotted and was not certain exactly how many units/per acres would be built on the 4 acres.

Comments from the public were all opposed to the zoning change and included:

- Concern for ecological impact of erosion and further degradation of Amity Creek
- Safety concerns due to dramatic increase in traffic in connecting cu de sac.
- Neighborhood is already relatively dense, and this would greatly increase.
- Negative impact on view from Skyline Drive and surrounding parkland
- Difficult to evaluate impact since the process has been confusing and it is not clear exactly what is being proposed.

Second public hearing to held April 9, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Possin

## **Planning Commission February 13, 2024**

Members present:

Gary Eckenberg, Brian Hammond, Danielle Rhodes, Michael Schraepfer, Andrea Wedul, Jason Crawford, Jason Holliday presiding in Margie Nelson's absence.

The meeting started promptly at 5pm.

Members were attentive, courteous, and appeared to have done their "homework."

Staff memos were attached to the agenda for each item.

Three corrections were made to minutes of the meeting January 9, 2024

1. Several items of the agenda were taken off due to no public hearing that were required prior to planning commission review.

2. Interim use permits given for new vacation dwellings on Missouri Ave.

Neighbor objections related to increased parking on a street that is not plowed by the city usually. Neighbor was referred to the city's form online for road issues if no plowing is occurring.

3. Interim use permit given to 4609 without public comments.

4. Review of plan for a new helipad on building A by St Luke's. The current helipad has been temporary. All neighbors have been notified by letters of the change. One neighbor noted supporting the new site given it will be 4 stories higher and noise will be less.

5. Review of an amendment proposed in response to the city council asking for a review of the vacation dwellings in RR-1 and RR-2 Districts. (RR- Rural Areas of 1 acre or more) Reference Text Amendment in PL-005 Staff Memo. The amendment states no more than 60 units/year. Definition of Vacation Dwelling seems to be a "gray area".

Several neighbors spoke against any further Vacation Dwelling development. (Area in reference is Page St./Osage ) It was originally zoned in 2009 for multi-use even though it was considered rural. The Commission voted 3:4 not approving the text amendment.

6. The Historic Resource Designation was taken off the agenda due to the need for a public hearing prior to it coming to the city planning commission. There was acknowledgement of the receipt of application.

Submitted by Ruth Strom Mccutcheon

**Planning Commission**  
**January 9, 2024**

1. Vacation Dwellings continue to be a consistent consent agenda issue. Currently there are no permanent permits, so applicants are given one-year permits.
2. Another recurring theme is parking for these interim vacation dwellings. A new permit is being given to a place above VaBene. The owner of VaBene expressed concern about lack of public parking and is concerned the VRBO will add more stress to existing limited parking.
3. Current regulations do not allow front yard permanent parking, but this regulation is not uniformly enforced. This came up in a request to remodel and the owner asked to be allowed to continue front yard parking which staff recommended be denied. It was noted this rule can be appealed if there are no alternatives to parking on the side or back of dwelling. After lengthy discussion this was tabled, and staff asked to do more research into the history of regulations.
4. Noted that the Northern Lights Project received a \$500,000 grant and continues.
5. Motion brought forth by Commissioner Rhodes proposing that there be a public hearing about zoning code developed around the "viewshed" of the Duluth Aerial Lift Bridge. Her proposal was for an area approximately 850' around the bridge. Currently there are 55' limits for heights on Canal Park. In 2017 the city allowed an 80' height on Lake Ave. Motion carried.
6. The staff reported that the Central High School Projects Environmental Study is progressing acronym AUAR (Alternate Urban Areawide Review). Visit [here](#) for more information.
7. A Miller Hill Mall analysis noted the parking lot has been improved due to investments made by Essentia and their Center for Personal Therapy as well as their Ambulatory Surgery Center. This was a priority for the city, and it has been completed.
8. West Superior St improvement plans are still underway to improve the "street scape."
9. 6th Ave East plans for safety...designs in process.
10. The website on housing development for the city of Duluth contains a map of all sites either completed or in process.

Submitted by Barb Possin and Ruth Strom Mccutcheon