



City of Bloomington Common Council

Legislative Packet – Addendum

(Issued on Wednesday, 10 March 2021)

Wednesday, 10 March 2021

5:30 pm – Land Use Committee

For a schedule of upcoming meetings of the Council and the City's boards and commissions, please consult the City's [Calendar](#).



City of Bloomington
Bloomington Environmental Commission

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 11, 2020

To: Bloomington Plan Commission

From: Bloomington Environmental Commission

Subject: PUD-17-20: W. Hillside Warehouse redevelopment, third hearing
300 West Hillside Drive, Tract E of Thomson PUD

The purpose of this memo is to convey the environmental concerns and subsequent recommendations for conditions of approval for this development petition. The Environmental Commission's (EC) objective is that the results of our review and suggestions will lead to enhancement of the ecosystem services provided, and the climate-change mitigation attributes of the site. The request is to amend the Preliminary Plan and District Ordinance for the Thomson PUD.

Human activities coupled with natural variations in the carbon cycle have resulted in a significant increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other "greenhouse gasses" in the atmosphere, thus causing measurable global warming. Controlling atmospheric CO₂ requires deliberate action that combines reducing emissions and increasing storage, while planning for adaptation to the changes that result. Addressing greenspace protection and enhancement are some of Bloomington's most important means to help reduce our own environmental footprint.

Absorbent vegetated land, otherwise known as greenspace, plays a central role in supporting community health; improving air, soil, and water quality; reducing energy use in buildings; and supporting climate-change mitigation. Greenspace may seem like a simple term and a mere aesthetic amenity, but greenspaces are very complex in the benefits they deliver to animals, insects, and microbes and in the protection they provide to the water, air, and soil systems.

An urban greenspace includes any permeable vegetated surface, public or private, set apart for recreational, aesthetic, or ecosystem services in an otherwise urban environment. It is space set aside to provide life-essential benefits people and other living things obtain from properly-functioning ecosystems; ecosystems which are the dynamic complex of plant, animal, microorganism, and human communities living in the context of certain weather regimes in a certain geologic setting.

The Environmental Commission is opposed to this petition and recommends denial. There is one design request that the commission cannot abide; the unreasonably reduced amount of greenspace. We cannot

justify allowing such a change from Bloomington's vetted regulations with nothing in return to benefit the community's environmental footprint.

The following list will follow the order of the requests from the *Thompson Tract E PUD amendment zoning rule, Rev 2, 12-27-20* submitted by the Petitioner.

Comments

1.) **IMPERVIOUS SURFACE COVERAGE**

Several important planning reports that both the City of Bloomington and city boards and commissions have produced call for increased acreage of green space and enhancement of the ecosystem services they provide. Some examples include the 2018 Comprehensive Plan (comp plan), the Bloomington Environmental Action Plan (BEAP), the Sustainable Action Plan, and the soon-to-be-published Climate Action Plan. All of these plans cite the plethora of reasons that greenspaces of various types are essential to climate-change mitigation and preparedness.

Even the Bloomington Municipal Code, 12.24.000, TREES AND FLORA, Purpose and Intent states the following. "It is the intent of this chapter to establish the responsibilities of the **city** and its **residents** toward flora and trees subject to these provisions and to assure those regulations and policies **maintain** and **increase** the tree canopy within the city." (bold type added)

The comp plan is "a tool used by the mayor, City staff, Plan Commission, City Council, developers, and other community leaders to guide decisions about investments and resources. Though primarily a tool of the City's Plan Commission, the Plan is also used by others..." The comp plan also states the following.

"We acknowledge that healthy natural systems are the foundations for flourishing human societies."

"Policy 3.2.1: Continue to limit the amount of impervious surface in new development or public improvements projects and increase green infrastructure to reduce urban runoff into storm drains, creeks, and other watersheds."

"Policy 3.2.2: Increase greenspace and protect environmentally sensitive areas."

"Goal 3.4: Increase the areas of native shrubs, trees, and herbaceous plants to increase ecosystem services associated with green infrastructure, including improved soil, air, and water quality and increased carrying capacity of pollinators, birds, and other wildlife."

"Outcomes and indicators, Outcomes: Greenspace has increased."

The PUD revision requests an impervious surface coverage of 80%, 70%, and 100% for different portions of the site, and greenspace of 20%, 30%, and 0 for those portions! The UDO calls for a maximum impervious surface area of 60% and greenspace area of 40% for both. The EC does not believe any PUD should allow less stringent environmental rules than the publically-vetted UDO. Therefore, the EC recommends that the Petitioner redesign the site to allow for at least 40% greenspace throughout the site, or that the petition be denied.



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2.) LANDSCAPE PLAN

The amount of landscape area proposed varies from 30% to 0%. The UDO requires at least 40%. The EC recommends the landscaped area is increased to at least 40%. The EC recommends that a Landscape Plan including street trees should be designed, but not necessarily finalized, at this point in the process so that City staff and the Plan Commission can envision the ecosystem services and aesthetics that will result at completion. The Landscape Plan will have to be approved prior to the issuance of a grading permit.

3.) BUFFER YARD and PARKING LOT SETBACK

A MM (Mixed-Use Medium-Scale) zoning district adjacent to an R3 (Residential Small Lot) requires a Type 3 buffer yard, which is 20 feet wide. The PUD is requesting a 14-foot wide buffer yard. The UDO requires the 20-foot buffer in addition to the 8-foot parking lot perimeter strip along the entire west side of the site. The EC recommends that the UDO-required buffers be added to the plan.

4.) PARKING LOT VEGETATION STRIP

The UDO requires an 8-foot wide vegetated strip along the parking lots perimeters. The PUD revisions are asking to eliminate this. The EC recommends that the 8-foot strip be added to the plan.

Recommended Conditions of Approval

The EC recommends that the following list be included as conditions of approval if this petition is approved; otherwise we recommend denial.

- 1.) Redesign the entire site to allow an impervious surface area of 60% at most.
- 2.) Redesign the entire site to provide at least 40% landscape area (greenspace).
- 3.) Redesign the entire site to accommodate the 20-foot buffer yard adjacent to the single-family homes in addition to the 8-foot parking perimeter strip.
- 4.) Redesign the plan to include the 8-foot vegetated strip adjacent to all parking lot perimeters.