

**UNAPPROVED  
CITY OF BLAINE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
November 9, 2022**

The Blaine planning commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Wednesday, November 9, 2022. Chair Goracke called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Members Present: Commission Members: Deonauth, Gorzycki, Halpern, Olson, Swanson, and Chair Goracke.

Members Absent: Commission Member Homan.

Staff Present: Shawn Kaye, Planner  
Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist  
Shelia Sellman, City Planner  
Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer

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**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Item 3.3 – Case File No. 22-0069 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting the following:

1. Rezoning 6.2 acres from B-3 (Regional Commercial) to DF (Development Flex).
2. Comprehensive plan amendment from CC (Community Commercial) to HDR-2 (High Density Residential 2).
3. Preliminary plat to create two lots to be known as Blaine Lakes Apartments.
4. Conditional use permit for a 196-unit apartment in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district.  
BLAINE LAKES APARTMENTS (SAMBATEK), 551 87<sup>TH</sup> LANE NE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Sheila Sellman, City Planner and Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer.

Jonathan Adams, representative for the Rainbow Village, thanked the commission for considering his request. He discussed how this project came about noting he purchased the Rainbow Village in its vacant state in December of 2020. Since that time, he has been working to fill the vacancies due to the changing retail market. He reported this led him to pursue a multi-family development on this site. He commented on the workshop meetings he attended with the city council and noted how the project had been adjusted to address the concerns of the neighbors.

Chair Goracke asked if the market studies were showing millennials were more interested in renting than owning homes.

Mr. Adams explained the market studies show that Blaine was in need of more multi-family housing. He suggested his partner address this further.

Shane Lefave, Roers Company, thanked the commission for their consideration. He explained Roers had two other projects under construction in Blaine. He reported the proposed project would be similar to the Axle property in Fridley, which was 95% pre-leased before opening. He indicated there was a strong demand for rental units in this market. He went on to describe the amenities that would be included within the units and stated he hoped this development would serve as a catalyst for the renovation of the entire Northtown Mall area. He commented further on how he worked to minimize the impact of this building on the adjacent neighbors by altering the side of the building and by adding new fencing and landscaping.

The public hearing for Case File 22-0069 was opened at 8:02PM.

Janet Zawadski, 8813 Jefferson Street NE, explained she attended the neighborhood meeting with the developers. She expressed concern with the fact the proposed four-story building would tower over this adjacent neighborhood. She suggested the developer pursue a three-story building. She noted she was also concerned about the berm on the north end of the property being impacted. She recommended a berm be constructed along Jefferson Street to give the neighborhood more privacy.

Scott Jordan, 638 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated he was worried about increased crime and the number of police calls that would be directed at this multi-family apartment building. He expressed concern with the fact the developer would be requesting TIF. He also feared the proposed rental rates were too high for Blaine renters.

Kris Hoberg, owner of Salon 10 in Rainbow Village, explained she has had the salon for 20 years now. She reported when she first leased the space it was beautiful but the property changed ownership and the new owner let the space go. She stated since Mr. Adams purchased the site, improvements have been made, but the Rainbow parcel remains vacant. She was of the opinion the property had more crime now than it would with have with renters. She commented this area of Blaine was dead and would remain dead without reinvestment. She understood the new building would be large, but she wanted to see this area promoted and improved.

Joe Mutzberg, 626 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated he did not believe the neighbors deserved apartments right next door to their homes. He explained his neighborhood has been in place since the 1950's and he has lived in his home for the past 10 years. He commented his back yard would now be seen by 200+ people. It was his understanding the Northtown

Mall area had the highest crime rate in the city and he anticipated adding 1000 more people would only compound this concern.

Sue Jordan, 630 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, explained Scott Jordan was her brother. She noted her family has three homes along 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She questioned who would be paying for this complex to be built and inquired if her taxes would be going up to pay for the project. She suggested an urgent care facility be considered for this area instead of an apartment complex.

Scott Haggenmiller, 8722 Van Buren Street NE, stated he works on these types of building all day, everyday for the last 20 years. He understood these types of buildings rent quickly and noted he supported the proposed development. He thanked the developer for hearing the comments and concerns of the neighbors. He commented he also appreciated the amenities that would be included in this building.

Sherry Hartman, 785 87<sup>th</sup> Lane, explained she supported the proposed development because it would be clean and tidy. She commented on how the area was currently very run down and lacked businesses. She supported the project moving forward.

Mr. Motzberg questioned what type of jobs in the area could support the proposed rental rates. He indicated he was also concerned with the fact this project was requesting TIF.

Steve Jordan, resident, discussed how the alignment of the building would push noise into the adjacent neighborhood. He suggested the developer reconsider the design and height of the building. He noted he was also concerned about crime spilling into his neighborhood from the apartment complex.

Mary Ann Jordan, 630 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated she has lived in her home for the last 70 years. She expressed concern about having a four-story building adjacent to her home and noted she would have no privacy. She anticipated the property value of the homes along Jefferson Street would be greatly decreased.

Lori Saroya, 782 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE, reported she was a newly elected member of the city council. She explained she has knocked on nearly 5,000 doors over the past six months and she has visited almost every single house in this neighborhood. She indicated these residents are tired of what was happening in the Northtown area. She stated they also did not want apartments. She encouraged the commission to hear the voices of the neighbors. She questioned why commercial businesses did not want to move into this space and asked where the neighbors would shop for their groceries. She inquired if people would want to live in these apartments, given the fact the property owner couldn't fill the space with commercial tenants. She stated she did not want to see the proposed building turning into a Section 8 apartment complex. She understood the commission had a job to do, but she believed there were many unanswered questions and suggested this project be put on

hold until a proper compromise could be reached for the residents living in Ward 1. She reiterated that this property was zoned commercial, and she recommended a commercial development be pursued for this site.

Ms. Hoberg reported the property owner has been trying to find tenants for the Rainbow property for the past 20+ years. She explained Trader Joe's would not come into this area until the entire area was renovated. She discussed how property values would actually increase as the area was revitalized.

Mr. Jordan questioned if the city had enough natural gas capacity to serve this apartment building.

Kristin Mattson, resident, stated she supported the proposed development. She reported there was a big demand for apartments in Blaine and she appreciated the fact the city was considering a different type of housing for future residents.

Ms. Jordan asked if the schools in the area would be able to handle a large influx of additional children. She proposed apartments be considered closer to the existing mall versus adjacent to residential homes.

The public hearing was closed at 8:38PM.

Chair Goracke clarified for the record the developer was proposing to build a market rate apartment complex and not Section 8 housing.

City Planner Sheila Sellman reported this was the case noting the development would not have Section 8 housing. She indicated the TIF request would be decided by the city council and EDA.

Chair Goracke questioned if the schools in the area could accommodate more students.

City Planner Sheila Sellman explained the city meets with the school on a yearly basis and noted they were aware of the plan, along with the plans for the entire Northtown area.

Mr. Lefave commented this property was previously an operating grocery store, which required water, sewer and gas supply. He stated he was proposing to construct a market rate rental project. He discussed the landscaping plan and noted he tried to create as much greenspace as possible.

Mark Anderson, Civil Engineer with Sambatek, discussed the fencing and berm that would be located along Jefferson Street. He commented on how he would work to provide good screening along this property line, which may include increasing the height of the existing berm.

Mr. Lefave reported all renters living in this building would have a background check and noted the site would have security cameras.

Commissioner Olson asked if the new building was only nine feet higher than the existing Rainbow Village building.

Mr. Lefave reported the existing building was 25 feet tall and the proposed building would be 42 feet tall.

Chair Goracke questioned how many four-story buildings were located in Blaine.

City Planner Sheila Sellman reported the city currently had eight apartment buildings that were four stories.

Commissioner Halpern asked how many of these structures were located adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood.

Community Development Specialist Elizabeth Showalter explained all were adjacent to a lower density residential use except for two.

Commissioner Halpern commented on the Northtown vision plan noting there would continue to be concerns regarding building height next to this neighborhood. He asked if the developer had considered lowering the building height to two or three stories.

Mr. Lefave stated this project began at 240 units and this number was reduced based on the feedback received from the neighbors. He explained townhomes could fit on this site, but he was not certain that this would be a better solution, given the fact he was proposing to construct a Class A building with onsite management. He commented further on how his project would be a catalyst for further development in the Northtown area.

Chair Goracke asked how many workshops the developer has attended with the city council.

Mr. Lefave reported he attended three workshops with the council and Mr. Adams had attended four.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069A a comprehensive plan amendment to High Density Residential 2 (HDR-2) with the following the following rationale:**

Case 22-0069A:

1. The proposed land use is consistent with the apartment type use proposed for the site.
2. The proposed land use and associated development is in an appropriate location for high a density project as it is close to major intersections and roadway systems.
3. The proposal achieves goal 3 of Chapter 5 of the comprehensive plan *the city recognizes varied housing densities as a means of accommodating community growth. The city will encourage increased density through appropriately designed and located townhomes and apartments, a variety of single family detached-style homes with clustering and varying lot sizes, and open space.*
4. The proposal is consistent with the Northtown District Vision plan identifying high density residential for the subject site.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069B a rezoning to DF (Development Flex) with the following rationale:**

Case 22-0069B:

1. The DF zoning has been used in the majority of residential development over the past several years within the City of Blaine as it provides the city with the greatest flexibility and control over the aesthetic and livability elements within the development.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069C a preliminary plat to create two lots with the following conditions:**

Case 22-0069C:

1. Park dedication is required for the 196 new residential units being constructed at the rate of \$4449 per unit, for a total park dedication fee of \$872,004 if paid and recorded in 2022. This amount must be paid prior to releasing the plat mylars for recording at Anoka County.
2. All development signage by separate review.
3. All existing structure removals require demolition permits.
4. The developer is responsible for recording the plat mylars with Anoka County. Proof of recording must be provided to the city prior to issuance of building permits.

5. A Site Improvement Performance Agreement and associated financial guarantee is required as part of the building permit application.
6. Final plat approval is required prior to issuance of a building permit.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069D a conditional use permit to allow a 196-unit apartment building with a zero-line setback for parking on the west side of the lot in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district with the following conditions:**

Case 22-0069D:

1. Floor plans, elevations, and civil plans shall be generally consistent with the plans dated October 31, 2022.
2. The following building setbacks shall be met:
  - a. Front (87<sup>th</sup>) - 40 feet
  - b. Front (89<sup>th</sup>) - 65 feet
  - c. Side (west) - 20 feet
  - d. Side (east) - 191 feet
3. The parking lot setback shall be at least 15 feet but can be up to a zero-lot line for the west side.
4. At least three premium materials shall be present on each elevation comprising at least 50% of the wall area of each façade and the building and elevations shall be treated similarly. Premium materials include any materials listed in 30.54(e)(1) of the zoning code.
5. All disturbed areas, except those within stormwater basins or associated buffers shall be sodded.
6. The following quantities of plantings are required:
  - a. Overstory: 25
  - b. Conifer: 25
  - c. Ornamental: 25
  - d. Shrub: 168
7. This conditional use permit approval is contingent upon the approval of a comprehensive plan amendment by the Metropolitan Council from CC (Community Commercial) to HDR-2 (High Density Residential).

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Gorzycki. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the November 21, 2022 city council meeting.