

# Architecture Field Office

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## City of Edina

Cary Teague, Community Development Director  
4801 W. 50<sup>th</sup> Street  
Edina, MN 55424

To

From

Mic Johnson, FAIA

Date

August 28, 2017

Cary:

At your request, we reviewed the Sketch Plan submission for the proposed Crossroads mixed-use development based on our experience working with the Greater Southdale Work Group to craft a physical vision for how their guiding principles may translate to the built environment.

This project proposed is located on a catalytic parcel at 7200 and 7250 France Ave S, and in general we believe that the proposed project meets the goals of variety in scale of buildings, variety in building expression, creation of an active public realm and exhibits general consideration for the neighborhood.

Positive attributes of the proposal include:

- A planning strategy that breaks a superblock into smaller parcels.
- Pedestrian connections through the project at mid-block and around the west side
- Activating all sides of the buildings
- No vehicular access from 72<sup>nd</sup> Street
- A secondary road off of France for service and parking access. [Consider designing this as more of a woonerf to encourage a more pedestrian-like environment.]
- South-facing courtyards and residential activity zones that support interaction with neighborhood pedestrian patterns.
- Increased commercial activity on France and Gallagher.
- Integration of below-grade parking.

However, there are scale issues that are problematic along the west side of the site, adjacent to the existing 1 and 2-story houses, and along 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, the major street leading out of the residential neighborhood. We are also concerned about the proposed bike bridge and its lack of support for public realm activation on the street level.

It must also be noted that while the bike bridge is promoted as the primary differentiating attribute of this proposal – and is the focus of many of the responses to how the proposed project meets the Southdale area guiding principles – there is no certainty that this feature of the proposal will be

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funded as it is stated that it is incumbent on funding by other partners, including the County/Three Rivers Park District.

Our specific comments on the proposed plan are as follows:

- The proposed setbacks of 40' on 72<sup>nd</sup> Street support the transition from the neighborhood, however the proposed building heights do not meet the Work Group's intention to have buildings that are closest to the neighborhood with building heights similar to the adjacent 1 and 2 story houses.
- The distance from the neighborhood on the west side of the property is only 70' to the new development. The proposed building, 3 stories high, at approximately 250' long, is not in scale with the existing adjacent neighborhood houses. It is suggested at the proposed distance that the building height be no greater than 2 stories and the façade be designed to better fit with the scale of the adjacent houses. Three story elements could be used to gain occupiable space on this portion of the building but should meet a minimum setback of 20 feet from the west façade of the building. The four story portion above would need to be set back a minimum of 80' from the west façade. It is critical that this aspect of the proposed development be in scale with the neighborhood and is more sensitively treated as a transition between this single family context and the architecture of the broader development.
- The 6-story portion of the north façade along 72<sup>nd</sup> Street dominates the scale of the street, which is intended to have a similar 'residential' character in scale. Based on the 1 story commercial base of the building along France, the angular geometry of the 5-story portion could be shifted south to expose a 1-story base to meet the residential scale along 72<sup>nd</sup>.
- The 14-story portion of the proposal on Gallagher Drive and France Avenue seems appropriate in scale.
- The intersection at France Avenue and Gallagher is an important mid-"super block" connection for pedestrians and needs to be identified in this project as a public realm feature on par with the bike bridge.
- That being said, the proposed bike connection is, in our opinion, in conflict with the Work Group's efforts on focusing attention on the street-level public realm. With no guarantee that the bike bridge will be funded, a more development-ready solution would be to partner with the City and County to create a bike and pedestrian friendly intersection that would create identity for the project and the district. In addition to the Gallagher Drive/France Ave intersection, a pedestrian-friendly crosswalk should also be considered on 72<sup>nd</sup> and France as well.
- Is this project intended to be realized in phases? The narrative alludes that in a couple places but the phasing strategy is not clear in the sketch plan submission.

Thank you for the opportunity to review. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Mic