

# Blaisdell and 26th Street Apartments

## Concept Design Phase Questionnaire

4/19/2022

Eilat Group LLC - Property Ownership Group

### Project overview:

- **Please give a brief description of the project.**

The proposed project consists of two separate multi-family residential buildings on two separate lots: 27 units on 2542 Blaisdell Avenue and 15 units on 110 W 26th Street. Both structures are 3 stories tall (approximately 32' tall, plus roof mechanical and include ground floor enclosed parking for cars and bikes. Massing of the building is designed to maximize corner and outdoor spaces which provide excellent natural ventilation and sunlight. An outdoor courtyard space will be created to the north of the 26th Building and southwest corner of the Blaisdell Building as a common amenity.

- **How many units and what mix (studio, 1-bed, 2, bed, etc.)?**

Blaisdell: 27 units - (25) 1 Beds and (2) studios

26th: 15 units - (13) 1 beds, and a (2) 2 bedrooms

Average one bed unit is 500-550 SF

- **Will there be any retail or other types of uses?**

No.

- **What currently exists on the site?**

Blaisdell: Vacant lot

26th: 1544 sf office space, small rear parking area

- **What other buildings do you own/have you built in Whittier? How long do you typically hold properties before you sell them?**

Have not built other units in Whittier. Have 12 units under construction in Kingfield at 37th/Nicollet. That building will be a long term hold. There is not a finite timeline for this building, most commercial loan terms go for 3-7 years, so it is at those cycles that buildings are most often refinanced or sold. Due to energy and related incentives, a building sale is unlikely for at least 5 years.

- **What variances, if any, will you be requesting?**

Blaisdell: Front setback variance to allow the building to come forward to the new district overlay standard of 20'. The midcentury apartment building with the large C shaped auto drive is not a feature compatible with urban design to encourage in the

2040 plan and so planning staff is highly supportive bringing new buildings closer to the street rather than so far back.

26th: None foreseen at this time.

Globally, there is a considerable ROW distance between the property line and the sidewalk, adding 8-10' of front yard on each property. For Blaisdell, this makes the effective setback from the sidewalk 28' (from 20') and for 26th it goes from 10' to 20'. The 26th building will be about 2' closer to the street than the existing office building.

We attempted to combine the lots to have slightly better massing between the buildings and deduplication of some elements, but there are multiple zoning rules that prohibited the resulting lot size and shape. Staff could not support variances necessary to overcome those rules.

- **What is your anticipated construction timeline?**

Construction to begin in Q3 2022, pending city approvals. Construction schedule of approximately nine months, to open in Q2 2023.

- **Please attach any renderings or plans developed so far.**

Provided floor plans of each building, overall site plan and some basic massing models. Designs are preliminary and still being reviewed for all compliance elements.

#### Housing:

- **How much do you anticipate charging, on average, for each unit type?**

\$1100-\$1400 for studio/1 bedrooms

\$1900 for two bedrooms

- **What steps have you taken to ensure greater affordability in your property? Would you consider emerging strategies, such as utilizing the 4d tax credit, to bring down rents on select units?**

We have chosen not to have an elevator or underground parking that would drive substantial up front and annual operating costs. Until long term financing is stabilized, it is difficult to start the 4d tax credit programs without causing harm to the valuation of the building and as such causes issues with repaying loans and investors. It is a better tool 3-5 years out on a new build. The city unfortunately has no viable TIF process capacity or other tools that can be utilized on a reasonable timeline for a small project.

- **Who will your management company be?** Genesis Property Management / Heirloom Properties - (Companies also owned by the owners of the property).

- **What screening criteria will you use for residents?**

Screening criteria are basic requirements that are compliant with the city of Minneapolis

ordinances.

- **If the building will replace any current housing units, how have you engaged with those residents? What plans have been made to enable them to stay in the new building or relocate?**

Not applicable.

#### **Transportation:**

- **How transit-connected is the site, and have you considered support for alternative methods of transportation (bike parking for residents and guests, ride share, etc.)?**  
There is a bike parking space for each unit, additional guest spaces in the front of the building and a visitor/short term space off each alley for ride share usage. Given the excellent bike connectivity in all directions, we expect to see many residents who locate in the building to take advantage of those connections. Looking to pilot the Metro Transit reduced fare transit pass in another building nearby and may incorporate here as well. We will run conduit for EV and e-bikes in garage areas and install limited chargers to start.
- **How many parking spots (total and per unit)?**  
Blaisdell: 15 spaces (15/27 units, 0.55)  
26th: 9 spaces (9/15 units, 0.60)
- **What have you done to ensure a high-quality pedestrian experience?**  
The front of each building will use human scaled materials and have doors and windows that will provide a pleasant cadence of openings in the building. Using the front yard setback with excellent landscaping, small patio space and front ramp connection to the main entrances will create a public/private space to engage the sidewalk.
- **Have you done any studies on the impact of the additional traffic/parking?**  
No.
- **How will you deal with traffic diversions during construction?**  
Access to the site is very constrained due to the lack of any on-street parking lanes, so some temporary closures will have to take place for construction activity beyond just site underground utilities. The overhead utility lines along the alley will restrict some loading activities. May contract with the corner parcel to use parking lot in off hours for some delivery/loading activities.

#### **Design:**

- **From a design perspective, how does this project mesh with the surrounding neighborhood? (e.g., scale, style, color, materials)**  
As a three story structure, the building will be very similar to many other small to mid sized multifamily residential buildings in the neighborhood. The building will have

vertically proportioned windows and a vast majority of those windows will be operable to allow for natural ventilation. Large usable balconies and patios will be employed rather than tack on Juliette balconies good only for standing.

In terms of color palette, no loud or fluorescent colors (the lime green can go someplace less) or overly monochrome (like five shades of grey). We are looking at a light colored brick and potentially one of the buildings having some art deco type of brick details/form. The other facade may have a more contemporary facade and asymmetrical massing elements.

Brick will be modular (small bricks typical with older buildings - 8" long) and not utility bricks (what most new large buildings have - taller and 12" long). By concentrating the brick coverage to the front and the sides near the front, better human scaled details can be provided near the street where they are most seen. This follows most historic brick structures in the area which often had a more economical material down the sides of the structures. It is significantly more expensive to use the modular brick (more labor for same coverage) plus all brick requires extra thick foundation walls, so we use it in the locations where it brings the most value and provides harmony with the surrounding brick buildings, such as Calvary Baptist Church, 2545 Blaisdell, and 127 W 26th. 2530 Blaisdell, the multifamily building directly to the north, also employs this strategy.

- **How have the Whittier Design Guidelines influence the project?**

The Design Guidelines are awesome. I wish more designers actually would employ these strategies. Most architecture in Minneapolis is dull and lifeless, completely indistinguishable from place to place. We especially love the principals on page 11 that apply including:

Entries Giving Rhythm  
Color and Contrast Drawing Attention  
Details That Engage  
Richness of Materials  
Lighting (always downward of course)

We feel that we have or are incorporating the best practices for all the items in the Lot and Building section.

- **What materials are you using in the building? (Please include estimated façade percentages.)**

The building will be comprised of brick (in front facades) and metal siding around the sides and rear of the buildings. Compositional percentages have not yet been determined and will be provided on future elevations.

- **Will public art be featured on the site?**

In other projects, any public art has typically been associated with the front landscaping

or garden elements. There is a unique area for mural art along the south first floor of the Blaisdell building and along the west (alley side) of the 26th Street building where at grade parking will be. No firm decisions have been made at this time as the design of these spaces has not been determined.

- **How will you accommodate ADA accessibility?**

The building will be at grade and follow all requirements for units, parking and pedestrian access. The accessible ramp will be located in the front of the building to provide access to the sidewalk.

**Environment:**

- **What are the environmental features of your project (e.g., porous surfaces, green roofs, resident compost access, solar energy)?**

Following on the green building features employed at the Sundial Building in Kingfield, a range of energy, water, indoor air quality and healthy materials are being pursued.

The approach starts with a comprehensive energy model (WUFI software used often in passive house design) for the project to be able to analyze performance from the very beginning of massing design. The project will follow recommendations from a combination of building standards from Passive House Institute US (Jim Kumon is a Certified Passive House Builder) and Living Building Challenge. The project has budgeted some monies for solar PV and very likely to use a pre-engineered solar thermal panel for domestic hot water heating. Will actively clear vent and exhaust pipes to the perimeter of the building to maximize efficiency of roof for solar PV panels. Very likely to use some version of a ZIP wall panel (Those green boards with black tape you've perhaps seen around town - where OSB or plywood sheets would be), which has very good air sealing qualities for minimizing building drafts and leakages of conditioned air in or out of the building. Dual flush toilets will be standard.

Strive to have all bedrooms have an operable window in it and windows that have appropriate window shading/glass packages to optimize energy performance. Evaluating triple pane windows and working hard to keep them in the budget. Will utilize some form ERV/HRV (energy/heat recovery ventilator - provides fresh outdoor air while exchanging the energy in the air while doing so) and some units will probably use the very efficient mini split units for heating and cooling. Basis of design will be to utilize only electric utilities and appliances to minimize use of carbon intensive fuels.

Final strategies pursued is partly a function of energy rebates received from Xcel Energy and the City of Minneapolis through various green building programs.

- **What green space (total and public access) does your project have?**

Blaisdell: 3900 SF

26th: 3100 SF

Formal green and outdoors spaces will occur in the front of the Blaisdell property and the rear of the 26th St property. The north side of the Blaisdell building will have a gentle swale area to deal with rainwater between itself and the building to the north (which is 2' higher in grade). This will be a mix of pollinator plants and those which like more moisture and can handle deep shade.

Also, the existing fence is not located entirely on the properties in question, but we will work with the corner lot owner to address how to rebuild it due to its deteriorating condition in order to provide a safe transition between cars in the parking lot and the southern sidewalk along the Blaisdell building. Want to minimize the amount of shading such a fence has on the south building sidewalk and green area.

- Will your project include resident composting? Yes.

#### **Other community benefits:**

- **What community amenities will you offer for non-residents?**

There are minimal common space amenities in the building for residents or non residents. We do take pride in local and supportive landscaping and quality outdoor spaces. We will be working to incorporate areas in the south and east facing yards for raised gardens and opportunities for other urban horticulture that have possibilities for community interaction. Looking at a long planting/garden bed along the sunny south face of the Blaisdell building to both shade and provide an additional layer of foliage along the long exposed wall, which will be viewable from the street for some distance.

- **As a property owner, developer, property manager, how will you interact with the Whittier community?**

Developer and Co-Owner Jim Kumon is a former board member of the Kingfield Neighborhood Association and has chaired the KFNA Redevelopment Committee for nearly ten years. He frequently meets with developers and neighbors about projects. He participated in the Kmart development CAC in the mid 2010s. As Kingfield has recently seen a sudden influx of more than 175 units of housing along Nicollet Avenue between 36th-43rd streets in the last 18 months, there is a generational shift coming to development projects along the corridor. Jim would be happy to serve as a member of land use and/or transportation related committees of Whittier Alliance to share his expertise in development, landscape design, transportation infrastructure, urban design and architecture. Personally, the Kumon family are members at the Wedge and are frequent users of the Midtown Greenway.

