



October 26, 2020

Dear City Council Members and Members of the Planning Commission,

The ECCO Neighborhood Association Board welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the CPED's plans to codifying the built form regulations outlined in the 2040 Plan, in particular the proposed premium system. Our neighborhood has been a focal point for controversies around development in Minneapolis in recent years, and we have been deeply engaged in thinking about and discussing these issues. We seek to encourage thoughtful development while also preserving the livability of our neighborhood and our nearby jewel, Bde Maka Ska, and we broadly support the goals of the 2040 Plan.

We do, however, have some significant reservations with the proposed plans as outlined in the September 10, 2020 Memorandum and as elaborated in the public meetings this fall. We hope you will take our views into consideration as you proceed with this plan. Our two main suggestions, outlined below, are:

1. The definition and application of premiums to built form regulations need to be more robust and specific.
2. The process for application of the Shoreland Overlay District (SHO) and other overlays needs to be spelled out clearly.

The 2040 Plan increased the permitted heights along the edges of our neighborhood quite considerably. For example, along most of Lake Street (Corridor 6) in our neighborhood, the height increase in zoning regulations goes from the existing 2.5 or 4 stories up to 6, and the current premium proposal would allow up to 10 stories, which in our estimation is simply too high for this area of the city.

We feel the premium system as currently described is simply too permissive, and would allow most developers to increase the heights of their developments from 6 to 10 stories (or from 4 to 6 in Corridor 4, or from 10 to 15 in Transit 10) without much extra effort or meaningful concessions. We would advocate for much more robust language in the premium descriptions, to make it more exceptional to award extra stories beyond the 2040 plan's guidelines for Corridor 4, Corridor 6, and Transit 10.

To note a few examples:

- "Enhanced public realm" has no definition in the September 10 Memorandum (p. 22), and we wonder how is it different from another, separate premium "Outdoor open space", which has fairly basic standards that we imagine a developer would be likely to include anyway.
- Relatedly, we can imagine it not being terribly difficult to create a "Through-Block Connection" that is both public and outdoor, and a developer receiving 3 extra stories quite effortlessly. We would strongly advocate for the inclusion of language that would prohibit potential double- or triple-dipping—that is, that a single amenity could qualify for 2 or 3 premiums and then 2 or 3 extra stories would be granted.
- To fulfill the "Affordable Housing" premium, it appears the developer of a large (50+ unit) project need simply to follow the City's current inclusionary housing requirement and add one more affordable apartment or two, and they will receive this premium. Or, they will simply

need to include the affordable housing on-site. This strikes us as quite easy for a developer to fulfill and does not merit an extra story. We support this goal in the 2040 Plan, but would like a developer to include many more units to receive an extra story.

- Most recent development along Lake Street (and Hennepin) has included commercial space on the ground floor, because it is in the financial interest of the developer. It thus appears that many/most developers will receive a premium for doing something they'd likely already do.

These are just a few examples, but seems to us that the proposed premium system makes it relatively easy for a developer to go from, for example, 6 to 10 stories without much extra effort. Given that heights in these areas have been zoned until now at 2.5 to 4 stories, a jump to 10 stories would produce buildings in our neighborhood that are significantly out of scale with respect to the existing built form.

And a final note: we in the neighborhood have long advocated for thoughtful development around Bde Maka Ska, which is important to both residents of and visitors to our neighborhood. We have consistently encouraged respect for the Shoreland Overlay District (SHO) guidelines in order to protect the lake. We are pleased that the SHO height regulations will be maintained (Memorandum, p. 34), and we would request a clear statement that the SHO guidelines take precedence over the built form guidance. Indeed, we would appreciate the same language that on page 9 related to going above the proposed new maximums for height: "Height increase requests that exceed the values in the table will require a comprehensive plan amendment and a rezoning, which must be adopted by the City Planning Commission and City Council as part of a public hearing process."

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

The ECCO Neighborhood Association Board

cc: Mayor Jacob Frey
Janelle Widmeier, Principal Planner
Joe Bernard, Planning Project Manager
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