

Andrew Boucher

From: Tracy Severson <tracyseversonmn@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 16, 2025 6:37 AM
To: Andrew Boucher
Cc: Amáda Márquez Simula; Justice Spriggs; Rachel James; Laurel Deneen; Connie Buesgens
Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Multi-Unit Development in Columbia Heights

Dear Community Development Division,
CC: Columbia Heights City Council Members.

I'm writing as a concerned resident regarding the proposed development in Columbia Heights that includes two multifamily apartment buildings (132 units each), a mixed-use building with up to 175 residential units and 12,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, and 58 townhomes.

While I understand and support the need for strategic growth, I believe this particular project raises serious concerns regarding traffic, transit capacity, and overall community infrastructure.

Traffic and Road Capacity

The development is planned in an already congested corridor near Central Avenue and University Avenue. This area includes major retail centers like Target, Dollar Tree, and Petco, generating daily high-volume traffic. Adding 350+ new residential units could mean hundreds of additional vehicles, leading to increased congestion, longer commute times, and more wear on city-maintained roads.

Public Transit Limitations

Though some council members have advocated for public transit and biking as alternatives to car traffic, these aren't fully viable solutions for Columbia Heights at this time. Minnesota's climate limits year-round biking feasibility. Additionally, transit coverage remains limited. According to the Metropolitan Council's 2024 Transit Performance Evaluation, Metro Transit systemwide ridership is still only at 65% of 2019 levels, and many routes in the suburbs—including parts of Columbia Heights—suffer from reduced frequency and limited evening or weekend service. Without significant expansion, our current transit system simply cannot accommodate the demand this new development would bring.

Walkability & Daily Needs

Columbia Heights has a Walk Score of 28, classified as "car dependent" meaning many errands still require a car. In practice, sidewalk gaps and limited walkable access to amenities—especially in winter months—mean that residents will continue to rely heavily on vehicles, further increasing traffic and parking needs.

Community Infrastructure and Services

Columbia Heights already has a population density of about 6,460 residents per square mile. A development of this scale will strain our schools, parks, emergency services, and utilities unless the City takes preemptive action. Growth should be matched with investment—not just in housing but in the infrastructure that supports healthy, sustainable communities.

I ask the City to pause and fully assess the long-term impacts of this development, including infrastructure capacity, traffic studies, and transit improvements. Columbia Heights deserves smart, balanced planning—not just growth for growth’s sake.

Thank you for your time, and I appreciate your commitment to engaging with residents as part of this process.

Sincerely,

Tracy Severson

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