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**TO:** St. Francis Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Beth Richmond, Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Hiller Property Concept Review  
**DATE:** 7-10-2024 for 7-17-2024 meeting  
**APPLICANT:** The Weaver Bros Co. (Jeff Weaver)  
**LOCATION:** 3503 Bridge St NW  
**COMP PLAN:** Commercial (south half) and High Density Residential (north half)  
**ZONING:** B-1 Central Business

### **OVERVIEW**

The applicant, The Weaver Bros Co., represented by Jeff Weaver, has applied for review and discussion of a concept plan for a mixed commercial and residential development on a 5.1-acre site located at 3503 Bridge St NW. This property is located adjacent to Rum River North County Park and is near the high school. The proposed concept includes three 44-unit apartment buildings along the west and north sides of the property and a 5,280 SF commercial building with drive-through facilities in the southeast portion of the site.



The purpose of a concept plan is to provide the applicant with an advisory review of a specific development concept before the applicant enters into binding agreements, incurs substantial expense, or files a formal application. This process is intended to inform the applicant of the City's regulations and the Comprehensive Plan and to identify elements of the development concept which may not be in compliance with current requirements. Staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council will review the concept and identify areas for discussion. Ultimately, the goal is to provide feedback to the applicant who can then determine whether or not the development is worth pursuing.

### **ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED**

The Planning Commission is requested to provide feedback to the applicant on the proposed concept. No motion is required. Comments shared are not binding on the City nor do they constitute official assurances or representations of the City on future recommendations or approvals. The City Council will also review the concept and provide feedback.

As submitted, the current concept does not align with City regulations in a number of different areas. These are described in greater detail in the Analysis section below. Understanding that there are areas of this concept which would require amendments to the Code and/or flexibility from Code requirements, Commissioners should come prepared to discuss these discrepancies and to provide direction about whether or not they would entertain a development similar to the one shown in the concept.

If the applicant chooses to proceed with the project following concept plan review, there are two paths forward which may be appropriate. One would include amendments to the Zoning Code and the subdivision of the site while the other would involve the creation of a Planned Unit Development.

### **ANALYSIS**

#### ***Land Use***

This property is guided for two separate land uses in the Comprehensive Plan. The north half of the site is guided for high density residential use (12-60 units per net acre) while the south half along Bridge Street is guided for commercial use. A residential apartment is proposed on the southwest quarter of the site, which would reduce the amount of commercial land in this area by roughly half.

The proposed concept is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. A goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to "maintain a healthy balance between residential, commercial, business park/office, and park/open space land uses" within the City. Opportunities for development and redevelopment along Bridge Street were explored in the 2017 St. Francis Forward Plan. In that plan, this site is identified for housing infill development as a strategy to bring more people into downtown to support businesses and create a livable atmosphere. Commissioners should discuss if a residential building along Bridge Street is appropriate in this area.



The site is currently zoned B-1 Central Business. This district is intended to provide for the establishment of a mix of uses along the Bridge Street corridor, with consideration for pedestrian and bicycle access. The concept shows three apartment buildings and one commercial building with drive-through facilities on the site. The B-1 District only allows apartment buildings if they include a vertical mix of uses such as ground floor commercial. The B-1 District also prohibits drive-throughs. The intent of that prohibition is to ensure a stronger and safer pedestrian environment. The Planning Commission should discuss whether or not these uses would be appropriate on this site and/or throughout the B-1 District as a whole. This would suggest considering a code amendment.

City Code 10-41-03 allows no more than one principal building on a single lot, except in the case of a Planned Unit Development (PUD). As the concept proposes four principal buildings, Staff would expect to see this site subdivided into four individual lots as part of the development review process or included as part of a PUD. Note that all lots must be designed so that each has frontage and direct access onto a public street. This would imply that the proposed street access would be public and meet city street standards if the property were to be subdivided.

The applicant may wish to pursue a zoning map amendment to rezone the northern half of the site to the R-3 High Density Residential District. This rezoning would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's guidance and would allow apartment buildings as a permitted use. Lots rezoned to the R-3 District would be required to meet the dimensional standards of the district, including but not limited to, lot area, lot width, and setbacks.

### ***B-1 District Standards***

The B-1 District includes specific design requirements which were created to encourage a pedestrian-friendly, "downtown" feel along the Bridge Street corridor. These design requirements represent the minimum standards needed to enhance the design of the district as established in the 2019 Bridge Street Design Guidelines. The following design requirements are identified on the attached concept plan and would need to be addressed in subsequent plans for the development of this site:

- Buildings must be pulled close to Bridge Street and meet all minimum and maximum setbacks
- Parking lots prohibited between Bridge Street and the front of any principal building
- At least 70% of the ground floor frontage on Bridge Street shall be used for publicly-accessible, non-residential, active use purposes including but not limited to storefronts, business lobbies, and meeting areas
- Primary entrances for properties along Bridge Street must orient toward Bridge Street
- All street-facing buildings walls must be at least 30% transparent
- Windows must be installed at regular intervals along the length of the building

### **Access**

The property is located along Bridge St NW and has one existing access point. The applicant is proposing to utilize the existing access point to serve the property. This choice is supported by Staff as it reuses an existing access and is located further away from the roundabout to the east. Since Bridge St NW is a county road, Anoka County would have the ultimate decision on the placement of this access point.

### **Discussion Items**

Staff will review the following items at the meeting for discussion purposes. These questions are marked with purpose boxes and comments on the attached concept map to show how each would apply to the concept.

1. Is the City supportive of reducing the amount of commercial land along Bridge Street in favor of a residential apartment?
2. Apartment buildings and drive-throughs are currently not allowed in the B-1 District. Does the City feel that these uses could be appropriate on this site and/or throughout the B-1 District as a whole?
3. Pedestrian access is an important aspect in the B-1 District. What types of internal circulation is the City looking for in this development?
4. This site is located within the B-1 District and is therefore required to meet all B-1 District design standards. Are there any standards that may not be appropriate to apply to this concept?

### **Attachment:**

- Concept Plan – clean
- Concept Plan – marked up version