

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, April 20, 2026 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Jerome Benner, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Dan Elenbaas, Tim Flanigan, Mark Morrow, Lisa Nelson, Bill Richtman, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Kemi Ajayi, Busayo Okusanya (Paradigm Central Housing LLC);
Alex and Larissa Jarvis (1203 Laurel Avenue);
Jim Brummer, Abigail Crouse, Amy McDonough (University of St. Thomas), Brian Lapham (BWBR);
Joshua Williams (City of St. Paul);
Josh Capistrant, Ian Greasley, Colleen Striegel

Media: Jane McClure

1. Welcome and Introductions; Consent Agenda

Dean Cummings, co-chair of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED), welcomed members of the committee and members of the community.

The March 16, 2026 meeting minutes were approved.

The April 20, 2026 meeting agenda was approved with the following addition:

- Discussion of UPDC's vision of the appropriate process to revise University of St. Thomas' Conditional Use Permits, presented by Mark Morrow.

2. Paradigm Central Housing LLC Development of Affordable Housing at 1730 University presented by Busayo Okusanya and Kemi Ajayi

Busayo Okusanya and Kemi Ajayi, co-founders of Paradigm Central Housing LLC (<https://paradigmcentral.org>), presented their plans to develop a 50-55 unit, 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom, 100% affordable apartment building at 1730 University Avenue West. (The property currently consists of 6 lots on University Avenue.)

Ms. Okusanya and Ms. Ajayi have been working in real estate since 2009. They have experience with supportive housing and assisted living facilities, but this will be their first affordable housing development. Their target market is individuals and families earning less than 30% area median income (AMI), including those who are experiencing housing instability. Ms. Okusanya and Ms. Ajayi are reaching out to the neighborhood early in their process to better understand the needs and desires of the community. Their initial plans were for 20+ 2-bedroom units, 13 3-bedroom units, and 6 4-bedroom units, but they have already received feedback that the greatest needs are for 3- and 4-bedroom affordable and deeply affordable housing units.

They intend to offer supportive services onsite. The building will be managed by Premier Property Management (<https://www.premierrentalsearch.com/>).

Ms. Okusanya and Ms. Ajayi are seeking funding for the project from a breadth of resources, including the City, County, Metropolitan Council, and State.

Comments included:

- The developers were thanked for engaging UPDC early in the design process.
- The developers were encouraged to reach out to Keystone Community Services, which operates a food shelf at 1800 University Avenue West.
- Because it is likely that most of their residents will not be able to afford a car, the developers were encouraged to consider the services needed to support living without a car, including access to groceries.
- Because the target market includes families, the developers were encouraged to include greenspace and a playground in their plans. The developers stated that they intend to include greenspace and a playground. The developers also noted that the YMCA is nearby (on the north side of University Ave).
- The developers were encouraged to consider point access block / single-stair building design, rather than double loaded corridor design, if zoning and building codes would allow.
- The developers were encouraged to consider building security issues. The developers stated that the building will be managed by Premier Property Management (<https://www.premierrentalsearch.com/>), and they are attentive to building and tenant security needs.

3. 1203 Laurel Garage Variance Requests

presented by Alex and Larissa Jarvis

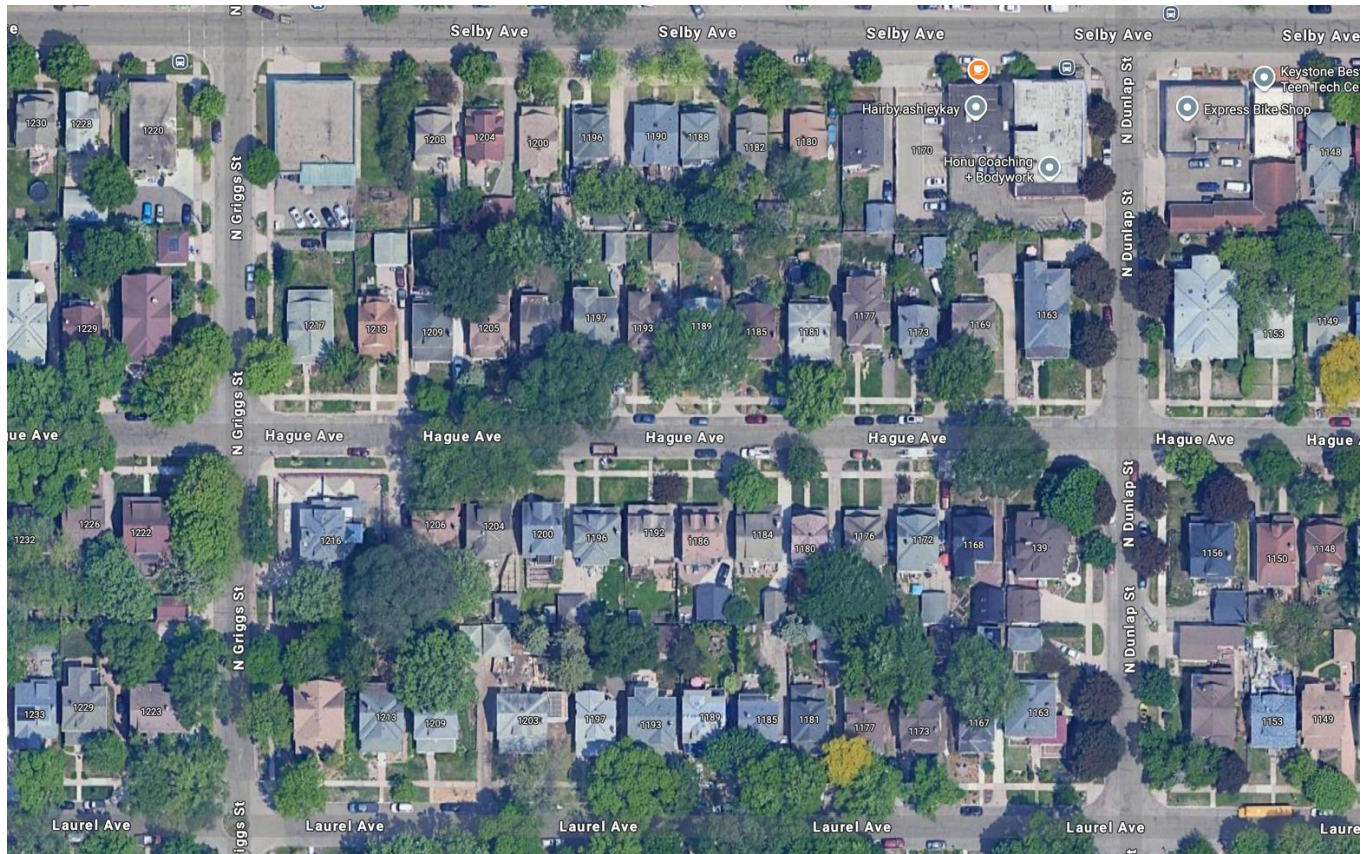
ACTION: SUPPORT the requested variances for the rear (north) and side (west) of the proposed garage

Alex and Larissa Jarvis presented their plans to replace their existing 1 ½ car garage, which is deteriorating, with a 2 car garage. They have submitted an application to the City for setback variances for the rear (north) and side (west).

Their lot is zoned H2.

Dimensional Standards				
	Existing	Proposed	Required	Variance
Rear (north)	18 inches	18 inches	10 feet	8 ½ feet
Side (west)	18 inches	18 inches	5 feet	3 ½ feet

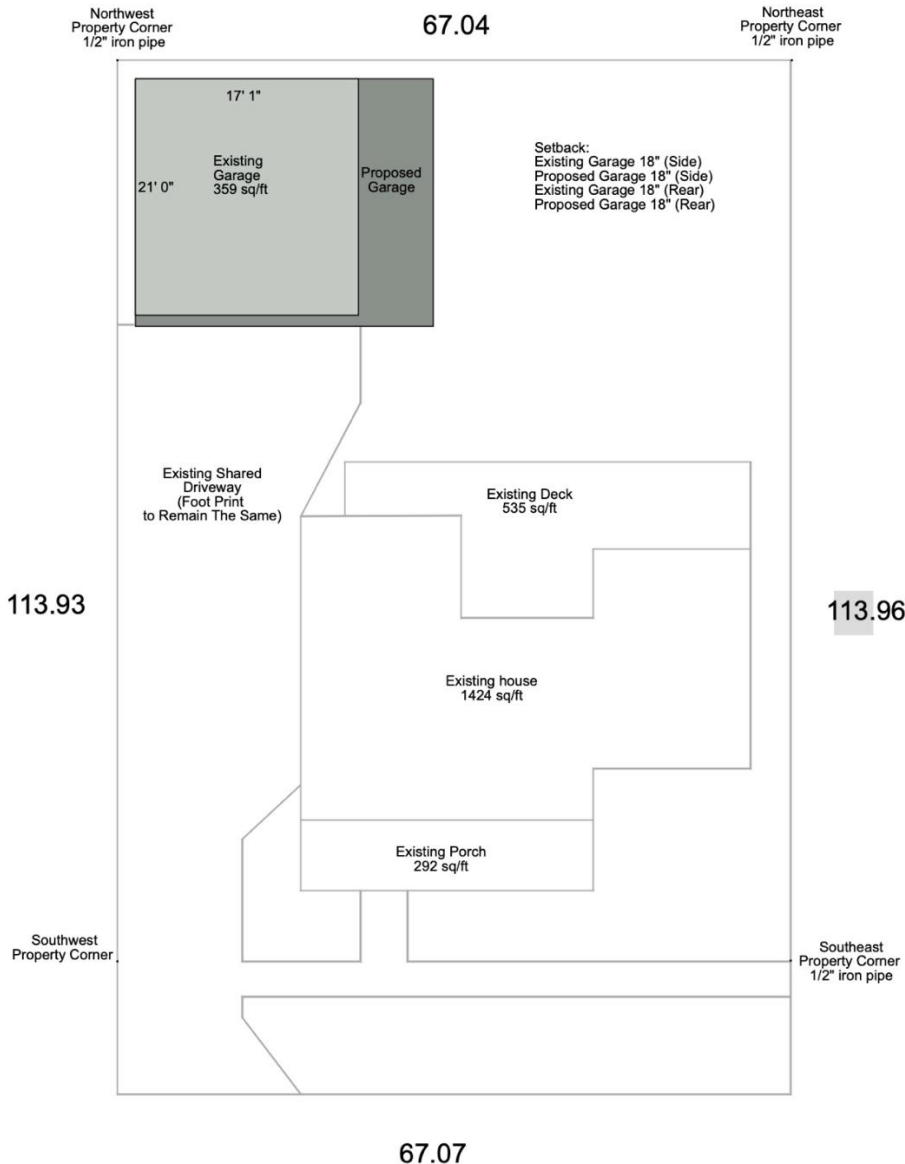
In their block, which is bounded by Laurel and Hague, Griggs and Dunlap, there is no alley. In the blocks of this neighborhood which do not have an alley, the garages are located very close to the rear property line. The requested rear variance would allow the replacement garage to be located the same distance from the rear property line as the current garage.



Source: Google Maps

The existing driveway is a shared driveway with their neighbor, and their existing garage is close to their neighbor's garage. Though the arrangement is uncommon, it addresses the challenges created by the small lots and lack of alley. Alex and Larissa Jarvis discussed with their neighbors a shared wall garage design to address angles of approach and space limitations, but were advised by the Department of Safety and Inspections that this would not be preferred. The requested side variance would allow the replacement garage to be located the same distance from the side property line and same distance from their neighbor's garage as the current garage.

Source:



Client:
Alex & Larissa Jarvis
1203 Laurel Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Garage Project:
1203 Laurel Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Contractor:
Davis Building & Remodeling
6640 Hidden Lane
Greenfield, MN 55373

Site Plan

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Source: Application

The enlargement of the garage to the east (which does not require a variance) will have no impact on their backyard neighbor's view because the neighbor's existing garage blocks the view of that portion of the property.



Source: Google Maps

A motion to SUPPORT the requested variances for the rear (north) and side (west) of the proposed garage was made, seconded, and approved (unanimously).

4. **University of St. Thomas Conditional Use Permit Proposed Changes presented by Jerome Benner, Amy McDonough, Jim Brummer, and Abigail Crouse (University of St. Thomas (UST)), and Brian Lapham (BWBR)**

Jerome Benner, Amy McDonough (UST) and Brian Lapham (BWBR) presented their vision for consolidating UST's existing Conditional Use Permits (3) into a single Conditional Use Permit, and revising the requirements in the new Conditional Use Permit to provide:

- transparency
- simplicity
- flexibility
 - to build more on-campus housing, parking, and academic buildings;
 - to allow mixed use buildings which include retail in order to provide on-campus amenities for students and prospective students, parents and visitors, and neighbors.

UST has no immediate plans for construction, but is considering what their needs will be in 5-10 years. The presenters stated that they are not rushing for a vote.

Ms. McDonough stated that there is a myth that UST intends to increase their enrollment. Rather, UST's 2030 Strategic Plan Enrollment Goal is to maintain enrollment (which, due to the decreasing number of high school graduates, may be difficult to achieve). UST would like to add on-campus housing to decrease the number of undergraduate students who must live off-campus. UST would like to add on-campus parking to decrease the number of UST-associated people who park their vehicle off-campus. UST would like to add academic buildings to expand their course offerings.

UST is grateful for the neighborhood, and wants to contribute to its success.

UST considers the existing Conditional Use Permits to be

- confusing and difficult to understand, and include provisions which are no longer relevant such as the housing buy-back program
- not aligned with the City's current development standards.
- duplicative of other City processes.
- unusually prescriptive, impeding their ability to meet current needs:
 - prohibiting property purchases within 1 mile
 - prohibiting vacating Finn between Summit and Grand
 - requiring mansion-style homes
 - prohibiting academic buildings on certain blocks
 - restricting the size and use of academic buildings
 - restricting where students can live on campus and the number of on-campus beds
 - restricting the number of parking stalls

UST recently made available an online survey of neighbors, and will be mailing postcards to the neighborhood, to better understand neighbors hopes and concerns:

- What makes this neighborhood special today, and what do you hope never changes?
- What would it look like for the university and the neighborhood to thrive together?
- What does a "vibrant and welcoming" neighborhood mean to you?
- How can St. Thomas help strengthen neighborhood pride and identity?
- How might campus spaces be designed to serve both students and the broader community?
- What does meaningful neighborhood consultation look like to you?
- How can the university show up as a trusted, long-term partner in the neighborhood?
- What is one opportunity you hope St. Thomas will seize for the good of the neighborhood?

Comments included:

- Appreciation that UST acknowledged community concerns, including the "loophole" in the Student Overlay spacing requirement created by the recent zoning change to allow more than 2 units per structure. However, the time frame for action (5-10 years) will be too late to impact the conversion from a multigenerational neighborhood to a monogenerational neighborhood.

Joshua Williams, Principal Planner at the City of St. Paul (josh.williams@ci.stpaul.mn.us) noted that the teardown-replacement developments must and do meet City codes.

- Opposition to the expansion of parking because it will encourage more driving, which will reduce walkability.

Alternatively, there was also support for the expansion of on-campus parking in ramps and underground.

Amy McDonough noted that there are City codes which require colleges and universities to provide parking, and that the recently completed Lee & Penny Anderson Arena generated considerable concern about additional spillover parking to the neighborhood. UST Anderson Parking Facility was built to accommodate an additional 2 floors of parking, but the current CUPs do not allow this. Ms. McDonough noted that there is a temporary parking lot which was built to accommodate construction parking, but the current CUPs do not allow it to be used for parking other than construction.

Ms. McDonough noted that freshmen are told not to bring a car, and sophomores must enter a lottery for a permit in order to have a car.

Ms. McDonough noted that dining options next to campus are limited to Davani's and Gus Gus, and that transit options are limited.

- Encouragement for UST to develop shuttles to support car-free living, including grocery shopping.
- Concern that on-campus housing is more expensive than off-campus options.

Jerome Benner stated that UST only charges for the academic year, making the cost of living on-campus comparable to the cost of living off-campus.

- Encouragement to follow design standards along Summit which are as nice or nicer than the elegant houses and mansions to the east.

5. UPDC Vision of the Appropriate Process to Revise the University of St. Thomas' Conditional Use Permits

presented by Mark Morrow

Mr. Morrow thanked UST for sharing their vision for development of their campus, and the changes in the Conditional Use Permits needed to pursue that vision. However, he also encouraged everyone to think about what the appropriate process should be to replace the 3 existing CUPs, which include the 2004 legal settlement by the City and UST with Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA), Merriam Park District Council (now Union Park District Council), and Macalester Groveland District Council. He suggested that the best approach might be formal legal mediation of all of the parties involved in the 2004 settlement.

He suggested that the process should begin with detailed documentation of all that is required by the 3 CUPs. He also suggested that the proposed changes that are south of Summit Avenue should fall primarily to Macalester Groveland District Council and West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC), with UPDC having a secondary role.

He also suggested that the conversation with the District Councils, WSNAC, and SARPA should include discussion of the longstanding concerns of:

- off-campus parking by UST-associated individuals
- strengthening the multigenerational neighborhood

Due to the late hour, these concerns will be discussed at the 05/18/2026 CLUED meeting.



Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, February 23, 2026 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Jerome Benner, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Ben Quam, Bill Richtman, Deanna Seppanen, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Jim Brummer (University of St. Thomas), Amy McDonough (University of St. Thomas), Chuck Evens (Damon Farber Landscape Architects), Ian Greasley

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, January 26, 2026 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Joe Hughes, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Bill Richtman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan, Catherine Kane

Guests: Cole Hanson (Safe Homes Saint Paul), Brian Harrison (Red Maple Ventures), Mike Hahm (United Village), Joe Abraham

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, December 15, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, David Guetschow, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Bill Richtman, Deanna Seppanen, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: