



Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

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October 31, 2007

Theresa Cunningham  
CPED Multifamily Housing  
Multi-Family Housing Development Division  
105 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

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Dear Theresa:

Re: Riverview Road/54<sup>th</sup> Street Development Proposals

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the three development proposals submitted in response to the RFP for Riverview Road/54<sup>th</sup> Street. As you know, NENA has been actively involved in the RFP process as well as the NESAP planning process that preceded it. We consider the project site to be an important gateway to the City of Minneapolis, as well as a residential neighborhood with a unique history and character. Whatever is built will be important to the local area residents as well as the entire Nokomis East neighborhood.

#### Background

NENA and residents worked together in May to develop a set of design principles for the site which were incorporated into the RFP. Members of our Planning and Development Committee have been involved in this RFP process from its beginning, as well as the NESAP planning process since 2005. They are well versed in the area and the site itself, the desires of the project's neighbors, and the diverse views of residents of the entire Nokomis East neighborhood.

NENA hosted a town meeting on October 11, 2007 where all three developers were given an opportunity to present their proposals, and neighborhood residents had a chance to comment and ask questions of the developers. About 50 people attended the meeting, including 13 representatives of the developers and city staff. Five attendees lived outside Nokomis East. Participants at the meeting were asked to complete comment cards on the proposals, describing what they liked, disliked, and would like to see changed about each proposal.

#### Comments

We received about 20 comment cards at the October 11 meeting, and have received additional cards in the mail, emails, faxes and comments by phone calls. A few of the additional comments are from people who attended the meeting and wanted more time to complete their cards. Others are from people who did not attend the meeting but had viewed the proposals, and some are from people who have very limited knowledge of the three proposals. We have received a total of 48 comments.

Comments from residents clearly reflect a diversity of views on the proposals, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. They also reflect the fact that none of the proposals is considered perfect. Members of NENA's Planning and Development Committee have thoroughly reviewed each of the proposals and residents' comments. They have

developed a list of pros and cons for each proposal, and taken the comments we have received into consideration. (Pros and cons and comments received are enclosed at Attachments A and B).

We have paid particularly close attention to the opinions and desires expressed by the resident's who will live near the project, as well as those of residents from the larger Nokomis East neighborhood. We are aware that at least two neighborhood churches are actively supporting the PCNF/CommonBond/Habitat proposal and asking their members to actively support it.

### Recommendation of the Nokomis East Board of Directors

While we believe that all of the proposals could be significantly improved upon, the one that appears to have the best potential for enhancing the neighborhood is the proposal by Timbercraft and Eldercare of MN. It is consistent with NESAP, and it does the best job of responding to the neighborhood's priorities as reflected in the Riverview Road Design Principles.

An important consideration is that Timbercraft has planned and arranged for site control of the two privately held parcels in the proposal area. This additional 25,000 square feet allows for more flexibility in design, a site plan than honors the gateway concept, enhances the Yardville ROW open spaces, and allows the lowest unit density per square foot.

The fact that the Timbercraft/Eldercare of MN proposal has the most support among residents in the immediate area could be a significant factor in the project becoming well integrated into the neighborhood. We believe that the Timbercraft development team is the most likely to respond positively to suggestions for changes from the neighborhood. We are also aware that the support of local churches for the PCNF/CommonBond/Habitat proposal might help contribute to its success.

While NENA strongly supports the desire for moderate income senior housing in the area, we have reservations about the Riverview Road site being the best location for a senior project in the neighborhood and believe the site may be better used for disabled veterans housing as proposed by Timbercraft/Eldercare of MN.

NENA has reservations about the ability of Timbercraft to sell the condo units, and would want some assurances that the project will not become de facto rental due to the slow condo market.

Whichever development team is selected, NENA looks forward to working with the team to ensure a successful and attractive project.

Sincerely,

George D. Jelatis  
President and Board Chair

Rita Ulrich  
Executive Director

cc: NENA Board  
Council Member Sandra Colvin Roy  
Kevin Walker, CPED

Enc: Attachment A – Pros and Cons; Attachment B – Comments received