CEDAR RIVERSIDE PROJECT AREA COMMITTEE
510 20th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55454

7-CORNERS TASK FORCE REPORT December, 1977

The contents of this report describe a method of allowing and controlling limited development in the 7-Corners area during the immediate future while overall development issues in Cedar Riverside are being resolved. The report presents a review process, proposal review criteria and a conceptual physical plan which can be used to evaluate proposals and protect the community's interests in 7-Corners.

The report will also serve to direct the long term development process for the area.

It contains the following major sections:

I. HISTORY of the 7-Corners Task Force
II. PREVIOUS PLANNING, a description of previous planning conclusions which were used as a basis for Task Force decisions
III. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, long and short term
IV. CRITERIA, a list of criteria for development proposal review
V. PHYSICAL PLAN, a description of specific land use boundaries and priorities
VI. CONCLUSIONS
I. HISTORY

For the past three months, residents and businesspeople from 7-Corners, Minneapolis Redevelopment and Housing Authority staff, Cedar Riverside Project Area Committee staff, and PAC delegates have been attending planning workshops for the 7-Corners neighborhood.

The workshops grew out of a public debate over a development proposal submitted to MHRA and PAC in August. Mr. Tom Noble, Inn Management, Inc., wanted to build a 175-room motel, bar and restaurant with 250 surface parking spaces using 3 acres of land next to the Guthrie II and extending back to 1st Street.

In the process of reviewing the proposal, PAC delegates decided that there was not enough information available with which to judge the impact the motel would have in 7-Corners. PAC was particularly concerned that development not take place in a haphazard fashion because of the limited amount of land available. The following resolution was passed September 6, 1977:

"That no development should occur in 7-Corners until design criteria, in enough detail to allow a decision among alternative proposals, is developed by the PAC. This process should include residents and business people and should take no longer than six months. PAC staff will organize the process of developing the criteria and it will include MHRA. It should also include a process for encouraging and selecting among development proposals."

PAC staff organized a series of 7 workshops and mailed an invitation to every household and business in 7-Corners asking residents and business people to participate. The workshops began in September and ended the last week in November. Approximately ten people attended regularly. This report is a result of the work done by participants in the workshops.
II. PREVIOUS PLANNING

The major sources used during the workshops are 1) the Cedar Riverside Task Force Report, a development plan accepted by the MHRA, City Council, and the Cedar Riverside PAC; 2) the 7-Corners Study, a site analysis sponsored by the PAC during the spring of 1977; and 3) I.O.G.T. research conducted by the PAC staff.

1. CEDAR RIVERSIDE TASK FORCE REPORT

The 7-Corners Task Force used the Cedar Riverside Task Force Report as a basic guideline to determine what future development would take place in 7-Corners. The report was a product of a Special Task Force appointed by the City Council in February, 1977. The Council was responding to a resolution of the New Community Development Corporation (HUD) of December, 1976.

In that resolution New Communities generally accepted a development proposal for 5,000 new units in the whole Cedar Riverside area and directed its staff to determine by June 15, 1977 whether that proposal was acceptable to the City of Mpls. and other local parties. The conclusion of the Task Force, after spending several weeks reviewing each neighborhood in Cedar Riverside, was that 1900 new units and 450 rehabbed units were more acceptable numbers thereby rejecting HUD's 5000 unit proposal. The Task Force Report was accepted by the City Council and the MHRA commissioners in late May, 1977 and is considered the basis for future development in Cedar Riverside.

Considering 7-Corners, the Task Force Report states:

"The Seven Corners area is generally bounded by Interstate 35W, First Street South, 12th Avenue South, and Highway 12. The area is characterized by commercial usage with some residential space above the ground floor commercial areas. There is a small amount of low and medium density residential usage as well. With a few exceptions most of the structures are in need of rehabilitation or demolition. Approximately half of the property is owned by CRA, with the balance generally owned by the University of the Batzli interests.

For residential development, the Task Force recommends that, in addition to the rehabilitation of approximately 150 units (mostly located above commercial space), a maximum of 550 new units be permitted in mid-rise structures not exceeding 15 stories in height. The tallest new residential structures should occur in the area nearest First Street with reduced heights closer to Washington Avenue. The Task Force did not feel this would be an appropriate area to encourage housing for families with children."
2. 7-CORNERS STUDY

The 7-Corners Task Force has evaluated and accepted the following conclusions of the 7-Corners Study:

a) Except for housing above commercial, the housing stock in the area is too deteriorated to allow for successful rehabilitation;

b) Traffic noise and unfavorable topography make much of the site marginally desirable for housing. Proximity to the university, however, suggests the possibility of a demand for low-cost-low-amenity housing;

c) Present commercial activities and structures in 7-Corners seem to be the most valuable existing asset;

d) The completion of the law school with its enclosed pedestrian walkway may significantly increase student use of 7-Corners commercial facilities; and

e) A scarcity of developable land in 7-Corners produces a competitive situation between commercial growth and new housing development. If exclusive commercial expansion exceeds 70% of the existing square footage (grade level), severe limits on housing sites will occur. This will lead toward either higher buildings or fewer units then specified in the Task Force Report.

3. I.O.G.T. RESEARCH

The importance of the I.O.G.T. Hall (1416-18 2nd Street South) was discussed by workshop participants. The hall has a great deal of historical significance when the cultural habits of early immigrants to Cedar Riverside are considered. Two surveys of the building were done—the first by Gail Bronner, Mpls. Planning Commission and the second by Stan Fishman, an architect hired by the PAC. Ms. Bronner's opinion was that the building has no architectural significance, but restoration might be justified by the events that took place there in the early part of the century. PAC staff called Charles Nelson of the Minnesota Historical Society and he also stated that a building of this
type can be saved because of its historical significance.

Mr. Fishman's initial opinion is that the building is in very poor shape and would require new plumbing, wiring, and extensive structural repair.

The 7-Corners Task Force did not make a decision concerning the I.O.G.T. hall, however, a group of residents now living in the building have formed a committee to pursue preservation and restoration of the Hall. Their recommendations will be reviewed by the PAC.

III. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Task Force recommends that a development process be designed for the overall Cedar Riverside redevelopment district. Until that process is established, no development in 7-Corners which does not conform to the limits established by the criteria and physical plan described in this report should occur. This report should also be incorporated into that overall development process.

LONG TERM STRATEGY

In the typical urban renewal project, a public agency which has acquired the land disposes of it to the first proposals received which meet a set of rather general criteria. Coordination amongst development proposals can be accomplished only in the drafting of the criteria. This type of process seems particularly inappropriate for 7-Corners for a number of reasons:

a) The very limited development sites, and the importance of necessary trade-offs between residential and commercial uses means that a careful budgeting of available sites is necessary.

b) The desired character of the commercial property in 7-Corners can best be obtained by encouraging entrepreneurial initiative; this in turn requires as much flexibility as possible for commercial developers.

c) Development must be closely linked to that of the rest of the area in terms of availability of services, parking facilities, housing unit mix, and probably tax increment generation. This requires some measure of coordination of development planning with the rest of Cedar Riverside development, which could probably be more readily accomplished by development strategies other than the traditional urban renewal approach. 7-Corners will be making the largest contribution of housing units and probably tax increment of any of the sub-neighborhoods.
d) There is more potential for community-based development in 7-Corners to generate capital for other development activities than in any other of the sub-areas.

e) Timing of development of commercial, housing and facilities must be carefully coordinated.

These considerations suggest an approach more like the New Community approach — that is, with development planning coordinated by the land-holding entity. The following problems of such an approach must, however, be avoided:

a) A "Master Plan" approach, which is economically or philosophically tied to a very specific end product and development schedule is far too inflexible — it can’t cope with the inevitable economic set-backs or delays nor effectively incorporate lessons learned.

b) Concerns of residents and the public must be paramount over those of investors.

c) The potential importance of both entrepreneurial enterprise and community-oriented economic development must be recognized and utilized.

These considerations lead to the concept of a hybrid between the typical urban renewal approach and the New Community approach as originally conceived. Until this concept is implemented, development in 7-Corners should be limited to that described in this Task Force report.

INTERIM STRATEGY

Since it may be desirable to begin development before all overall Cedar Riverside issues are fully resolved, the Task Force recommends the following:

1. The Cedar Riverside Project Area Committee should continue in its present role as a community forum for development proposal review. This role has and should include both informing residents about proposals and informing developers of the community’s criteria and demands.

2. The FAC should use the physical plan and Development Proposal Review Criteria presented in this report to determine the desirability of proposals for 7-Corners.

3. The FAC should establish a review process that will provide adequate time to evaluate proposals and receive community response where appropriate.
4. Once a generally acceptable proposal is received, sufficient time should be allowed to receive alternative proposals.

IV. CRITERIA

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL CRITERIA

1. Any proposal which is not consistent with the Concept Plan (Fig. 1) should not be accepted.

2. If more than one acceptable proposal is being considered, the proposal which does most to achieve the overall goals of the concept plan should be favored.

3. Proposals presented by community based developers should have priority over outside developer proposals.

4. If all else is equal, proposals which generate the highest tax increment should be favored.

5. Proposals which severely threaten existing businesses should not be accepted.

6. Proposals which do the most to meet community needs should be favored.

7. No proposal should be accepted unless the developer commits to an affirmative action program for the hiring of minorities and neighborhood residents. This plan will have to include management positions.

8. No developer should control more than 25% of the land in 7-Corners.

9. The following commercial activities priorities should be applied:
   First: Primary services as housing development makes it necessary.
   Second: Diversification.
   Third: More entertainment.
   Fourth: Other.

10. Housing
   a) Proposals which provide affordable student and singles housing should have the highest priority.

   b) High density low-rise should be favored over elevator buildings where possible.

   c) Housing development proposals which include provisions for resident participation ownership structures should have priority.
d) Proposals with housing designs which include "defensible space" features should be favored over those which do not.

11. Parking

The single most serious threat to the existing businesses in 7-Corners is the loss of parking due to new development. Since the Task Force feels that existing commercial activities as well as commercial structures should be maintained and remain as the focal point of 7-Corners commercial development, this parking problem must be considered in all redevelopment decisions.

The Task Force recommends the following criteria to deal with parking:

1. No new businesses should be allowed to locate in 7-Corners without providing at least the number of parking spaces required by city zoning laws. Primary services exempted. Commercial parking is presently not controlled. Therefore, present businesses suffer a loss of available spaces every time a new business opens without adequate spaces provided. If this trend continues, valuable existing businesses could be lost before redevelopment occurs.

2. Any new development requiring 50 or more parking spaces must provide a structured rather than surface parking facility. The Task Force anticipates that the density after redevelopment will be too high to allow for surface lots. If new development occurs now with permanent surface parking, it could obstruct the ultimate most efficient use of the land. This requirement could be fulfilled either independently within the site boundary of the proposal or in conjunction with other businesses and public agencies by building a ramp on one of the designated sites. See physical plan.

3. Any proposal which requires the termination of existing parking spaces must include a plan for adequate replacement parking. This plan should describe feasible parking conditions for affected businesses during the construction and redevelopment period AND for the long term after redevelopment is complete. Adequate parking replacement means the provision of at least one for one spaces within a reasonable walking distance of the business being served.
The cost of replacement parking should be considered as a development cost parallel to relocation benefits, i.e., be paid out of tax increment bonds.

12. The following design criteria should be applied to all proposals:

**Commercial**

No new building should be set back from the street significantly further than existing buildings.

New buildings should have brick street-facing facades which are sympathetic to those of the existing buildings. (Dania Hall may be taken as a desirable model).

New buildings should not exceed four normal stories nor be fewer than two normal stories. Floors above commercial should be used for housing.

**Housing**

No building should exceed 15 stories.

All housing buildings should include construction techniques which will minimize the impact of negative site conditions, i.e., noise and air pollution.

Taller buildings should be as removed from the commercial area as possible.

**Parking**

Surface parking should be short term only and should occur behind buildings wherever possible.

Construction of ramp should include commercial functions at grade level and should be as unobtrusive as possible.

**Open Space**

Street-scaping should reduce the impact of the automobile on pedestrian traffic and should develop a sense of historic place.

Open space for the housing should be integrated into the structures rather than centralized into a park.

Ramp-top space in housing areas should be functional rather than sculptural.
V. PHYSICAL PLAN

The Seven Corners neighborhood will be a mixture of high density housing and commercial. A maximum of 550 new units can be built and the 150 units primarily over commercial should be rehabilitated.

The 7-Corners commercial strip should be seen as primarily an entertainment district, but should also include a diversity of commercial activities to serve people living in the area and people who will be attracted to the entertainment nature of the neighborhood. Dinkydale in Dinkytown is an example of the character of commercial uses that might be attracted to locate in 7-Corners. Infill commercial space could house small shops, offices, and residential units on its upper floors.

Primary services such as laundromats and grocery stores should be integrated into plans for housing. They can be located either in residential or commercial space and would serve primarily residents, but could also serve to attract students and others to the area. The Chateau in Dinkytown is an example of housing that has commercial space available on its lower floors that attracts students and neighborhood people.

Existing commercial activity that should remain includes: Dudley Riggs, Guthrie II, Funk's, Sargent Preston's, Hagen's, Theatre in the Round, and Bullwinkle's.

Existing structures which are considered by the Task Force to be valuable and worthy of remaining are indicated on Figure 2.

The 7-Corners Task Force recommends that physical development in 7-Corners should follow the conceptual plan depicted in Figure 1.

The major features of that plan are:

1. **LINK WITH CAMPUS.**
   The 7-Corners commercial area should expand eastward on Washington Ave. toward the University of Minnesota campus.

   This will connect the existing commercial area to the proposed 19th Ave. corridor and will capitalize on the student/pedestrian traffic generated by the indoor/outdoor walkways included in the new law school building.

2. **STREETSCAPE**
   Landscaping along Washington Ave. and Cedar Ave. should enhance the historic character of the existing buildings and provide more walking space for pedestrians.
3. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Since existing commercial buildings are in relatively good condition they should be maintained and rehabilitated where necessary. In addition, new construction should occur as infill (using the land between existing buildings) or as expansion along street fronts.

Commercial uses should be combined with housing and parking where possible.

4. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Auto traffic noise and unfavorable topography make much of the housing area undesirable for long term housing. Housing should therefore be designed for students or other people who will find it attractive because of its location. It should be relatively high density and use construction techniques which will minimize the impact of negative site conditions, i.e., noise and air pollution.

5. PARKING RAMP

A parking ramp should be built as soon as possible.

Two potential parking ramp sites have been identified in Figure 1.

If the freeway site is used for a ramp, the 19th Ave. site should be used for housing. It is a potentially noisy site for housing but this disadvantage is overshadowed by its easy access to the University and the 7-Corners commercial area.

If the 19th Ave. site is selected for a ramp the freeway site should be used for housing or commercial uses. This site is both noisy and marginally located. Development should be favored which will provide a sound buffer for the rest of the area.

6. WALKWAYS

An attractive and safe outdoor walkway should be provided between Cedar North and the 7-Corners area. Also, an indoor walkway might be provided through the center of the Theater in the Round block.

7. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The area below the 19th Ave. bridge adjacent to the freeway could be developed as light industrial since it is highly undesirable for housing.
VI. CONCLUSIONS

Of all the conclusions which can be drawn from this report, two stand out as most immediately significant. They are: 1) a response to the motel proposal and 2) the recommendation to build a parking ramp in 7-Corners.

1. MOTEL: Under the provisions of the criteria and physical plan presented in this report, a motel is an acceptable activity for 7-Corners, but the proposal presented to the PAC in August, 1977 is not acceptable for these reasons:

   a) It requires too much land. (See figure 1)

   The site lines described in this proposal extend well into areas designated for housing development. If the motel were built as proposed, the amount of land available for housing would be 10% less than is indicated in the physical plan. The effect of this loss of available land for housing would be to increase the pressure for higher density on the remaining housing sites.

   Also, if the overall redevelopment district is considered, this loss of land for housing may tend to reduce the total number of new units possible under the Cedar Riverside Task Force Report. This, of course, will make that document slightly less attractive to high density advocates without reducing the number of new units designated for the South side of Highway 12.

   b) It proposes surface parking over 250 spaces.

   The criteria in this report would require parking facilities of 50 or more spaces to be structured, i.e., either a ramp or included in the building. (See page 8)

   This requirement rises out of the recognition that the final product of redevelopment in 7-Corners will be too dense to allow surface parking. If the motel were built as proposed, almost two acres of land (15% of total land available for development) would be given over to surface parking.

   c) The proposed site boundaries obstruct proper auto/fire access to Cedar North and the River bluff.

   The proposal offers no desirable alternative access routes and seems to ignore the whole issue of traffic movement through 7-Corners.

   d) The site indicated in the proposal tends to divide up the developable land inefficiently. The land left over for housing development seems "left over".
A new motel proposal would be generally acceptable under the criteria of this report if:

a) the site were confined to the area adjacent to I35W indicated as commercial and possible parking ramp in Figure 1. The site is 1.75 acres.

b) it provided structured parking.

c) it conformed to design criteria

d) the developer agreed to an affirmative action hiring program

e) if a specific replacement parking plan were included in the proposal.

2. PARKING RAMP: A parking ramp should be built as soon as possible on one of the two sites indicated in the Physical Plan (see page 12) because:

a) It will provide existing businesses with parking as their existing parking is lost to redevelopment.

b) Readily available commercial parking on a community level will make 7-Corners more attractive for development.

c) A ramp will relieve the existing parking shortage.

BUT the following qualifications must be recognized:

a) To date, no interested party capable of organizing a development effort has emerged.

Thus far there have been requests for studies, some of which have been conducted, but no one seems willing to provide the required leadership in the effort.

b) There is no evidence that there is sufficient existing commercial-related parking demand to justify extensive additional paid parking spaces.

If the ramp were free, there is little doubt that it would be used, but the transition from existing free parking to future paid parking is fraught with consequence.

A FAC sponsored parking study to be completed in January, 1978, hopefully will assist in sorting out these consequences.

c) The construction of a ramp will undoubtedly occur on someone's existing parking (either Riggs-Guthrie of Theater in the Round - U of Minn). This will require an interim parking solution for that someone.
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