



**Planning & Development Division**  
*Planning & Economic Development Department*

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411 West First Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802



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planning@duluthmn.gov

Date: May 27, 2020  
To: Planning Commission  
From: Steven Robertson, Senior Planner  
RE: Minor Amendment to PL 19-018 Essentia Health's Vision Northland MU-I Planning Review, Related to Location of Proposed Transformer/Utility Yard

On Wednesday, May 29, 2019, the Planning Commission approved PL 19-018, a Mixed Use Institutional (MU-I) Planning Review for Essentia Health's Vision Northland project. This new, approximately 940,000 square facility consisting of 18 levels and 312 beds, was approved based upon information resulting from the Environmental Assessment Worksheet PL 18-120.

An element of the Vision Northland facility plan included an electrical transformer utility yard located on the west side of Fourth Avenue East, approximately half way between First and Second Streets. A condition of the 2019 approval was that the transformer utility yard be set back 25 feet from the right of way of Fourth Avenue East, leaving room for screening/landscaping and vehicle bollards. The applicant is asking for a minor amendment to the approved PL 19-018 MU-I Plan; specifically the applicant would like to move the transformer utility yard closer to the Fourth Avenue ROW line.

At the August or September 2020 Planning Commission, the applicant will ask the Planning Commission to review a second MU-I Planning Review for a new 9 story, 1,000 space parking ramp/garage at the NW corner of Fourth Avenue East and First Street, directly across the street from the existing First Street Parking Ramp (a.k.a Medical Facility Parking Ramp). Because of this new proposed structure, which will essential be located around and above this transformer yard, the transformer yard will need to be moved slightly (25 feet) to the east to better fit in with proposed engineering and structural plans of the new parking ramp. The new location will be adjacent to the Fourth Avenue East right of way, but will have better security and screening due to the width and strength of the proposed new parking ramp's reinforced walls.

The attached parking ramp illustrations (façade, etc) are for review only, and the Planning Commission's approval of this minor amendment does not signify review or approval of any element of a future proposed parking ramp. A new public hearing and planning review at the Planning Commission is required for approval of a new parking ramp.

Staff are recommending that the Planning Commission approve the minor amendment to PL 19-018 MU-I Plan, with the condition that the project is constructed as shown in the plans and that this project is an integral part of a larger parking ramp.



PERFORMANCE  
DRIVEN DESIGN.

LHBcorp.com

May 12, 2020

Steven Robertson, Senior Planner  
City of Duluth  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St., Room 160  
Duluth, MN 55802

## **ESSENTIA HEALTH VISION NORTHLAND PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION PL 19-018**

On behalf of Essentia Health, LHB would like to request a modification to the location of the new utility yard associated with the Vision Northland Project and approved by Action of the City of Duluth Planning Commission under file number PL 19-018.

**Prior approved action:** The utility yard was originally designed as a stand-alone utility yard with metal siding installed around the perimeter of the yard to obscure views of the yard from 1<sup>st</sup> street and 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east. The yard was located along the alley between 1<sup>st</sup> street and 2<sup>nd</sup> street, 25 feet from 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east right-of-way. The offset from 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east served two purposes:

- 1) Provide a measure of safety from out-of-control vehicles on 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east jumping the curb and crashing into the utility yard.
- 2) Permit a more appropriate use of street/avenue fronting property.

**Requested modification:** A new parking structure is now proposed for this property and the team proposes to integrate the utility yard into the design of the parking structure. This integration has the advantage of enhancing the visual screening of the utility yard from public right-of-way, utilizing the design of the parking structure to screen the utility yard. However, the previously approved location of the utility yard negatively impacts the functional efficiency of the proposed parking structure. We therefore propose, and seek approval, to adjust the location of the utility yard to be offset 2' from 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east right-of-way. We believe this modification is warranted and propose to accommodate the previous concerns as follows:

- 1) The physical structure of the parking structure will provide enhanced safety from out-of-control vehicles on 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east. Not only are several reinforced concrete columns located between the utility yard and 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east, an 18 inch thick foundation/retaining wall will be built along the right-of-way. This wall will extend above both the utility yard elevation as well as the elevation of sidewalk and street along 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east, providing a barrier to any out-of-control vehicles.
- 2) Development of the site as a parking structure precludes any other use of the property between the utility yard and 4<sup>th</sup> avenue east. Leaving the utility yard in it's prior approved location creates a width of 23' of unused space. We believe this space could be better utilized by adjusting the location of the utility yard and locating this 23' to the west of the utility yard, which will improve the functionality and efficiency of the parking structure.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Attached please find preliminary plans and sketches further our intent. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this request, please feel free to contact me directly. We look forward to working with the Planning Commission further as we develop this project.

Utility Yard location  
May 12, 2020  
LHB, INC.

Page: 2

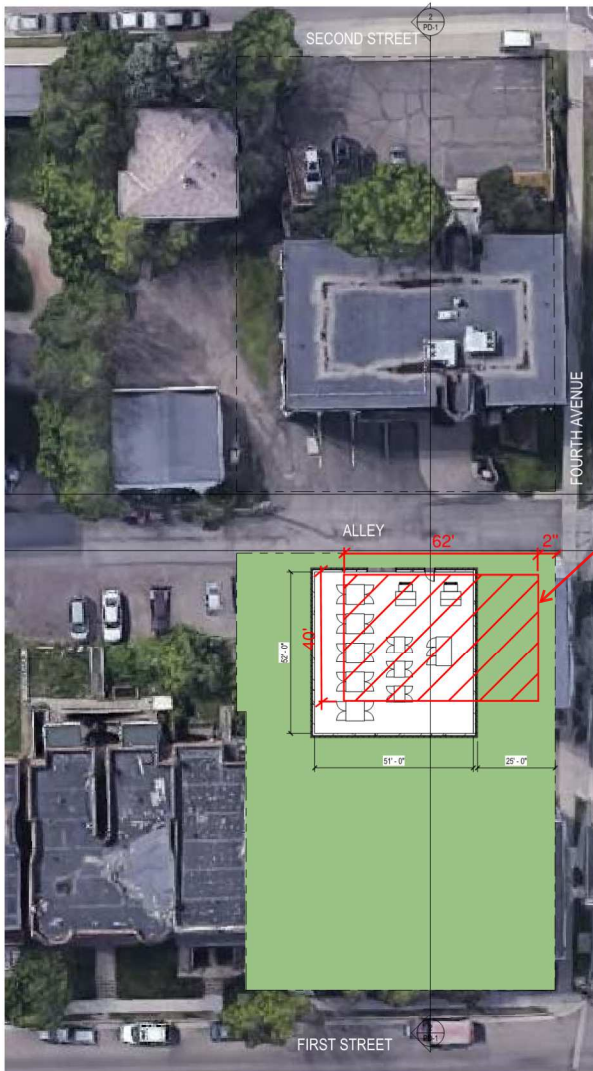


EVAN ALJOE  
HEALTHCARE STUDIO LEADER

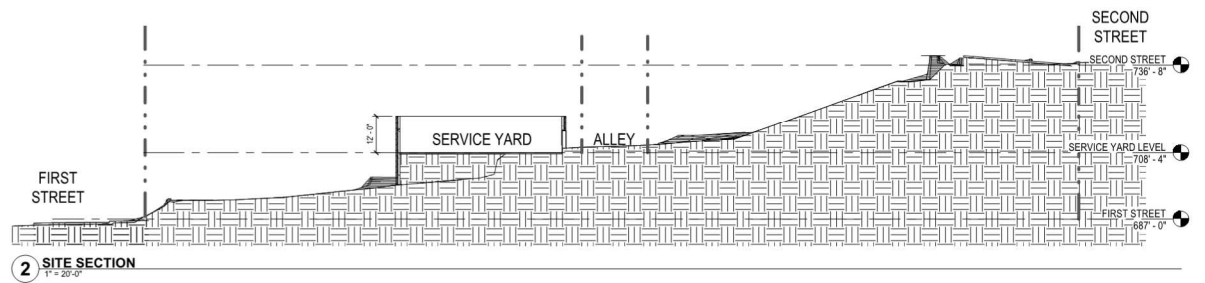
c: Dan Cebelinski; Essentia Health  
Oscar Gomes, Charles Kronk; Ewing Cole  
LHB Project No. 180203.00

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# SITE PLAN AND SECTION



PROPOSED  
ADJUSTMENT



VISION NORTHLAND  
TRANSFORMER YARD



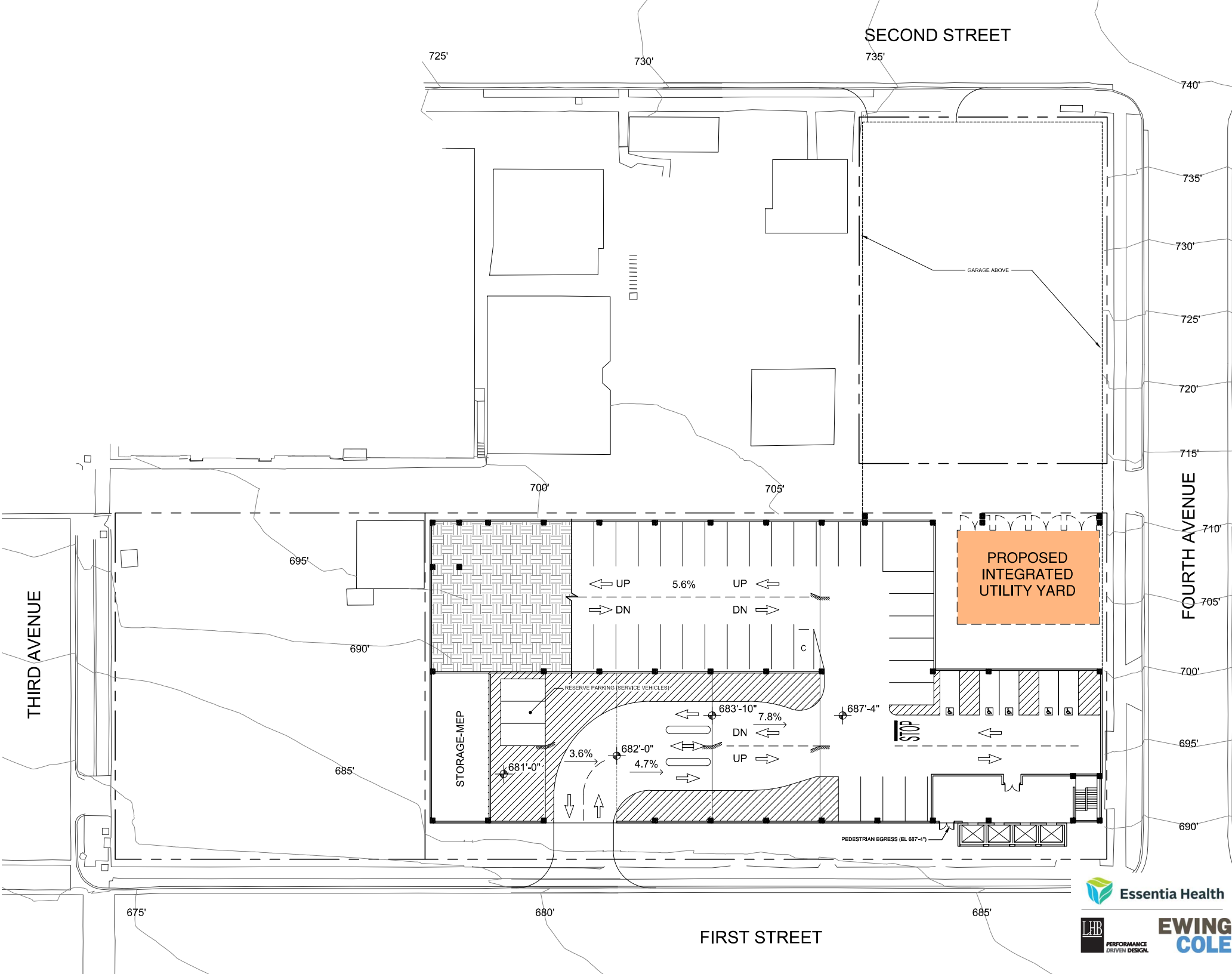
## TRANSFORMER YARD – VIEW 1

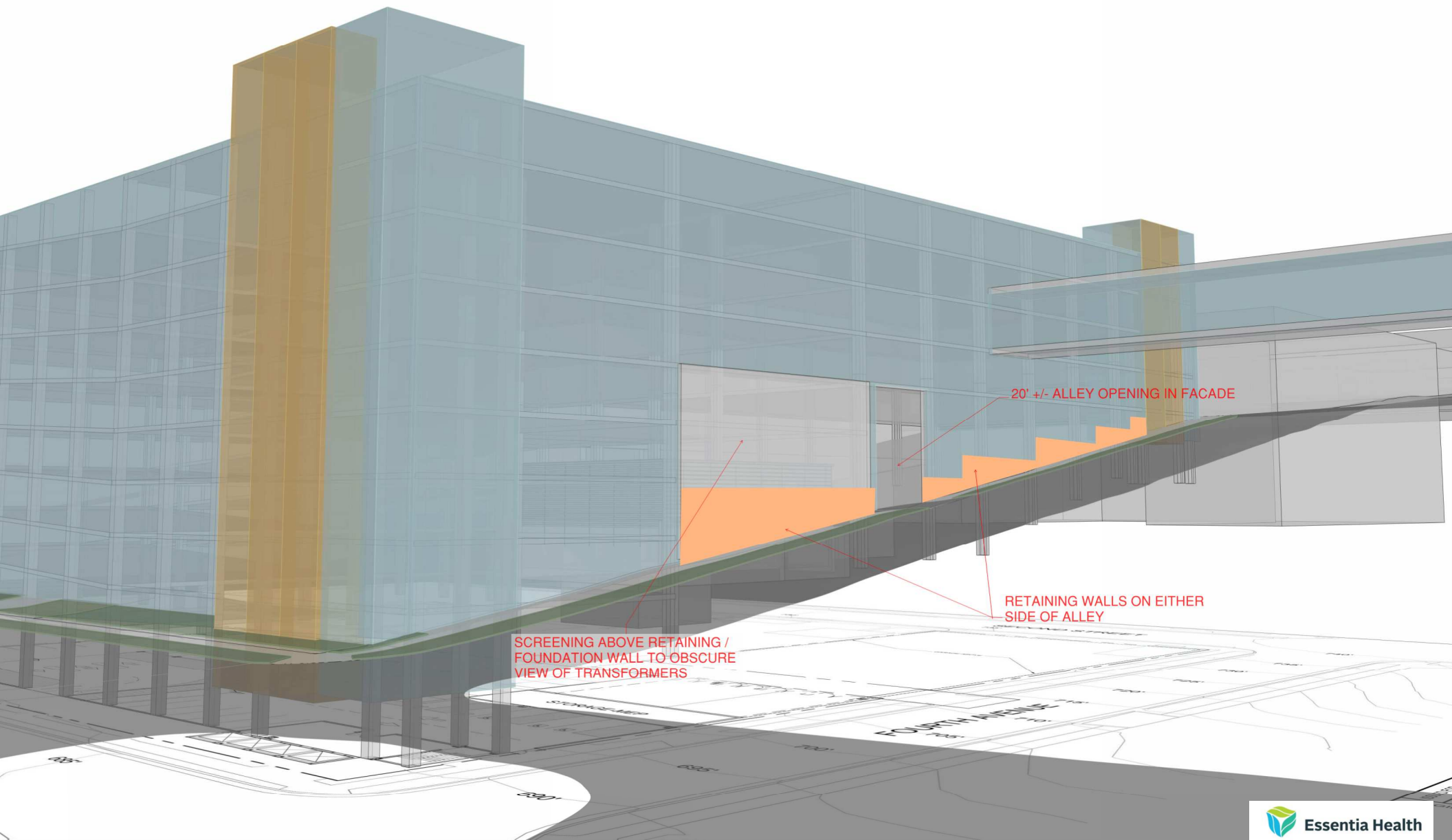




## TRANSFORMER YARD – VIEW 2







20' +/- ALLEY OPENING IN FACADE

RETAINING WALLS ON EITHER  
SIDE OF ALLEY

SCREENING ABOVE RETAINING /  
FOUNDATION WALL TO OBSCURE  
VIEW OF TRANSFORMERS

MASSING STUDY





## ACTION OF THE CITY OF DULUTH PLANNING COMMISSION

**Applicant:**

Scot Ramsey, Vice President Facilities  
Essentia Health  
East Region Administration | MDMC 130  
502 East Second Street, Duluth, MN 55805

**Date:** June 20, 2019

**Location:** E Second St and N Fourth Ave

**Planning Commission File Number:**

PL 19-018

**Proposal:** Applicant is proposing a new inpatient and outpatient healthcare facility adjacent to the existing St. Mary Medical Center. The 940,000 gross square foot project consists of 18 levels on a sloping site and will provide 312 beds, outpatient clinics, and includes a rooftop helipad. The project is within the MU-I (Mixed Use-Institutional) zone district, which requires it be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission at a public hearing.

The above matter came for hearing before the City of Duluth Planning Commission ("Commission") on Wednesday, May 29, 2019, notice of said hearing having been given to all interested parties in accordance with Section 50-37.11 of the Duluth Legislative Code. The applicant appeared and presented their request to the Commission. The Commission also received a report from Planning Division Staff. All other parties interested in the matter were given an opportunity to be heard. The Commission now makes the findings and conclusions:

**Findings of Fact:**

The project is within the MU-I (Mixed Use-Institutional) zone district, which requires review and approval by the Planning Commission following a public hearing. In addition to the MU-I Planning Review, there are several concurrent use permit applications submitted for this project for private utilities or private structure foundations within the public rights of way. The City is also proposing to rezone land (PL 19-023), near this site from MU-N, MU-C, and F-8, to MU-I and MU-N in conformance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and future land use map. The proposed expansion to the Essentia campus' MU-I area is intended to better reflect long-term plans for the campus.

The tentative timeline for the project involves site demolition in September 2019, excavation/blasting in October 2019, begin foundation in November 2019, begin structure shell in January 2020, occupy the structure May 2022, and finish minor outstanding close out items by July 2022.

**Conclusions:**

- A. The request is in harmony with the purposes and intent of the UDC.
- B. The request is consistent with the comprehensive plan.
- C. The request will allow reasonable use of the land.

**Decision:**

Resolved that application PL 19-018, is approved (Planning Commission vote 7-0), subject to the following conditions contingent upon either: issuance of a building permit, a certificate of occupancy, or a development agreement:

- 1) Submit a plan indicating how they will bring their surface parking lots into compliance with the UDC's landscaping and stormwater requirements, and must identify and post/sign locations for contractor and temporary construction employee parking;
- 2) Must submit a master campus sign plan for review and approval of the city;
- 3) Must meet MS4 standards as applicable;
- 4) Submit a UDC sustainability checklist, signed by the project architect or project owner;
- 5) Submit a sample of the fritted bird-safe glass for review prior to issuance of the building permit;
- 6) Submit a lighting plan with photometric plan;
- 7) Increase the number of bike racks to provide the capacity for at least 80 bicycles;
- 8) Amend the location and size of the proposed bus shelters in collaboration with the Duluth Transit Authority;
- 9) Change the proposed vehicle driveway access on Superior Street to either line up with the existing access for the Fitger's public parking ramp;
- 10) Revise the vehicle driveway access on Superior and East Second Street to reduce their width to not exceed the maximum recommend width for commercial or industrial uses in an urban area (2014 Duluth City Engineering Specifications and Standard is 26 feet);
- 11) Submit detail drawings of proposed pedestrian crosswalk improvements for city parks and recreation comment and city engineering review and approval;
- 12) Applicant is responsible for performing Gopher One State locate calls, and for submitting record drawings (prepared by a surveyor) of the private obstructions in the right of way related to this project;
- 13) Except as noted above, the project be limited to, constructed, and maintained according to the site plans, landscaping plans, and exterior elevations provided with this application; and
- 14) Any alterations to the approved plans that do not alter major elements of the plans may be approved by the Land Use Supervisor without further Planning Commission; however, no such administrative approval shall constitute a variance from the provisions of UDC Chapter 50.

Items 1, 9, and 10 are to be further resolved through coordination between Essentia Health staff and City Planning and Engineering staff.

Decided at Duluth, Minnesota, on Tuesday, May 29, 2019

BY ORDER OF THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION



Adam Fulton, Deputy Director of Planning and Construction Services

**Please note:**

Planning reviews approved by the Planning Commission shall lapse if the project or activity authorized by the permit is not begun within 1 year of the permit date. The building official may extend this period one time for a period of up to 1 year if the property owner presents a written request showing the reasons for the delay was outside the owner's control (UDC Sec. 50-37.1.N).

**NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL**

Any person aggrieved by, or any department of the city affected by, any decision of the Commission may appeal the decision of the Commission to the Duluth City Council pursuant to Section 50-37.10(4) of the Duluth Legislative Code. The appeal must be filed with the city clerk within 10 days of the decision. The appeal should be addressed to the council and specify the grounds for the appeal. The fee for an appeal is \$350.00. The appeal fee must be tendered when the appeal is filed.