

City of Duluth Planning Commission

**January 21st, 2026 – City Hall Council Chambers
Special Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order

President Gary Eckenberg called to order the meeting of the city of Duluth Planning Commission at 5:01 p.m. on Wednesday, January 21st, 2026, in the Duluth city hall council chambers.

Roll Call

Attendance:

Members Present: Gary Eckenberg, Brian Hammond, Danielle Rhodes, Dave Sarvela, and Kate Van Daele

Members Absent: Chris Adatte, Nik Bayuk, Jason Crawford, and Andrea Wedul

Staff Present: Robb Enslin, Jenn Moses, Jason Mozol, Ariana Dahlen, and Sam Smith

Public Comment on Items Not on Agenda

No comments.

Public Hearings

PLUMA-2512-0007 UDC Map Amendment from R-1 to R-P for Arris Townhomes [JM]

Staff: Jason Mozol addressed the commissioners and gave a presentation on the project. The applicant is requesting a UDC Map Amendment (rezoning) from R-1 to Residential-Planned (R-P) to construct townhomes on the property. The establishment of an R-P district requires rezoning the property per Section 50-37.3 from a current zone district to R-P and the approval of an R-P regulating plan per Section 50-37.11. that governs the uses, location, density, dimensional standards and character of the proposed project.

The bulk of the proposed district is property that was replatted into two lots as part of the Kara-Mia Addition of Duluth (PL22-086) in 2022. Apartments were developed on Lot 1 in 2023/24. The northwestern portion of this district includes two parcels from the Car Line Gardens plat. These parcels are currently undeveloped and do not appear to have ever been previously developed.

The subject property incorporates a total of 9.66 acres. 6.74 of those acres have been identified as developable and the remaining 2.92 acres would be kept as common open space. The future land use of the subject property is urban residential, which includes the greatest variety of residential building types, medium to high densities. The R-2 zone district would also be appropriate for this area.

Mozol went over the governing principles listed in the staff report and explained how the different aspects of the proposed project meet the R-P district criteria. He also described the modifications listed in the staff report that the applicant is requesting in their proposal, which include modifications to building height requirements, setback and frontage requirements, alternative landscaping plans, and private street plans. The developer held a public meeting

on December 3rd, 2025, with approximately 52 people in attendance, and the feedback was generally positive with some concerns regarding noise and potential changes to the neighborhood.

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with R-P application requirements. It will not create material adverse impacts on nearby properties due to the requirements contained in City ordinances such as stormwater, landscaping, screening of trash containers, and the establishment of a vegetated buffer surrounding the site.

Six public comments were received. Mozol addressed some of the comments regarding road design concerns and explained that the road design is not far along enough for the level of scrutiny it has already received. However, staff are willing to have more conversations with the applicant, other city departments, and neighbors. He also addressed some comments that were regarding the proposed rezoning and stated that the R-P allows for more creativity and density on the site, while R-2 zoning would take away from the amount of open space available.

Commissioners: Rhodes asked if there will be any accountability placed on the applicant to make sure that the bike path is included in their final design. Van Daele asked if it is common practice for projects to have a development agreement in place.

Staff: Mozol responded that the development agreement will include the bike path as a public benefit. It is common practice to have development agreements for R-P rezonings, and they serve as a good tool to ensure that proposed public benefits come to fruition.

Moses clarified that the city also engages in development agreements for TIF projects, but those development agreements have a higher set of standards. She explained that this project's development agreement is not a TIF project. Development agreements for R-P projects will focus on ensuring that the developer builds what they agree to build.

Commissioners: Commissioners asked staff to elaborate on the plan for the extension of Harding Ave, other potential zoning for the site, and permitted commercial uses in the current R-1 zoning.

Staff: Mozol stated that Harding Ave will go all the way through the development, and it was intended to be a road when it was platted many years ago. A portion of the road will be public, and the rest will be a private road. The developer is paying to improve the portion of the Harding Ave that is unbuilt, and the city will maintain it.

The Arris apartments site next to the subject property is zoned R-2, which allows for multifamily apartment use. The R-2 zone district would also be an appropriate option for the subject property, but it would not allow for as much creativity and public benefit compared to the R-P zoning. There are not many business or commercial uses that are permitted in the R-1 outside of accessory home occupations.

Applicant: Dennis Cornelius addressed the commissioners. He is with AMCon Construction and Design, and he worked on the original Arris apartments project. He spoke about the public benefits that will come from the proposed trail on the site, and the road extension will also provide public benefit as it will provide new access to the site. Cornelius stated that they are also working to mitigate environmental impacts to wetlands and trees. He echoed that the R-P zoning allows for more creativity and benefit for both the site and its neighbors. The project prototypes are included in the staff report, and he is looking forward to continuing working with staff on refining the project details if this application is approved.

Commissioners: Commissioners asked the applicant about the proposed density and height of the townhomes.

Applicant: Cornelius responded that there will be multi-story structures throughout the site while working with the natural contours of the land. He also stated that the current R-1 height requirements would be challenging with two-story and 3-story buildings.

Public: Antonio Davis 959 85th Ave W – Davis stated he is mostly in favor of the project. He requested that the developer use local contractors, vendors, and other resources for this project.

Applicant: Cornelius responded that they are not at the stage of hiring contractors yet, but they utilized local companies for the Arris apartments and are willing to do the same for this project.

Commissioners: Commissioners thanked the commentors and the developer for their work.

MOTION/Second: Van Daele/Hammond approve as per staff recommendation

VOTE: (5-0)

Communications

Land Use Supervisor (LUS) Report – no report.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully,

Jenn Moses, Manager
Planning & Economic Development