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More than 240 apartment units pitched on Girard Avenue

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A four-story building planned for 3220 Girard Ave. S. would have 76 units and require three single-family homes and a duplex to be demolished. Submitted image

A new development proposal would bring more than 240 new apartment units, split between three buildings, to a seven-block stretch of Girard Avenue in Uptown.

A six-story, 119-unit U-shaped building would rise at 2701 Girard Ave. S., on a site currently occupied by three single-family rental homes and a duplex. A block-and-a-half to the south, at 2832 Girard Ave. S., three other single-family homes would be

knocked down to make way for a six-story, 76-unit building. A four-story building planned farther south, at 3220 Girard Ave. S., would also have 76 units and would also require three single-family homes and a duplex to be demolished.

All three buildings would include green roofs and enclosed parking accessible by alleys. The two six-story buildings would have a mix of apartments leaning heavily toward studios and one-bedrooms. The larger of the two six-story buildings would have 74 underground and first-floor parking stalls, while the other would use an automated car elevator to fit 43 spots into the building's smaller footprint. Plans for the four-story building call for 38 parking spaces.

City staff have said plans for the six-story building at 27th & Girard are “too big for the site,” which is currently zoned for residential buildings four stories or shorter. Under the Minneapolis 2040 plan for growth currently under review by the Metropolitan Council, the site would allow buildings of only 1–3 stories. The other proposed six-story building at 28th & Girard is more in line with zoning guidelines; the 2040 plan would allow buildings up to 10 stories on the site. The four-story building at 32nd & Girard is currently zoned to allow four-story buildings, though the 2040 plan calls for buildings of three stories or shorter on the site.

Yellow Tree co-founder Robb Lubenow said his company aims to provide entry-point market-rate housing for people with salaries between \$30,000 and \$60,000. Rents would start at around \$1,095 for studios and around \$1,275 for 500-square-foot one-bedrooms in the six-story buildings. Lubenow said they are aiming to keep half of those buildings' units affordable to people who make less than 80% of Minneapolis' medium income, which currently translates to a monthly rent of under \$1,800. Less than a third of the buildings' units would have two or more bedrooms. (Predicted rents are not yet available for the four-story building, but would likely be similar.)

“We're not trying to do high-end luxury,” Lubenow said.



A six-story, 119-unit U-shaped building is proposed at 2701 Girard Ave. S. Submitted image

The project is a partnership between Yellow Tree and HGTV hosts Drew Levin and Danny Perkins, who have acquired the rights to the land.

Lubenow said Yellow Tree seeks to keep rents low by leaving amenities like swimming pools out of their buildings and by thinking strategically about how many parking spaces they include. His business partner Bryan Walters noted that over the last 2–3 years, Yellow Tree’s tenants have become less likely to demand parking and he expects that trend to continue.

“The only thing worse than not enough parking is too much parking,” Lubenow said. “It’s expensive, you have to reflect that in rent rates, home affordability, and it just trickles down.”



Plans for a six-story, 76-unit apartment building at 2832 Girard Ave. S. call for a green wall to face the parking lot behind the Piggy Bank restaurant in Uptown. Submitted image

The six-story, 76-unit building would overlook the Midtown Greenway and the parking lot behind the Piggy Bank restaurant. A brief walk from the Uptown Transit Center, the building is proposed for a site zoned R6, the city’s highest-density residential district, which allows heights of up to six stories. The developers are seeking setbacks and variances related to the automated parking system and the number of exterior materials. Plans call for a green wall on the building’s south side.

All three buildings would be located just a block away from the Hennepin Avenue transit corridor. The sites of the proposed buildings at 27th and 32nd streets are currently zoned R5, a high-density multifamily district that caps development at four stories.

For the 119-unit building along 27th Street, the developers are asking for a conditional use permit to build the apartment two stories higher, seven variances and site plan review. City staff said they want to discuss with the developers the project's size and the "number of applications required to achieve the project." Lubenow said they could decrease the apartment's height to five stories, but it would require eliminating underground parking to keep costs down.

For the four-story apartment between 32nd and 33rd streets, the developers are seeking a site plan review and a variance for setbacks along Girard Avenue and rear alley.

At a June 12 meeting of the Lowry East Neighborhood Association's zoning committee, neighbors criticized the 27th and 28th street buildings for their shadows, their "horrific aesthetics," and their potential impact on traffic.

Neighbor Steve Lauterbach said he liked elements of 76-unit building on 28th Street, but that DJR Architecture had designed the larger apartment building at 27th Street to be "massive and boxy."

"What motivated you folks to try to shoehorn a building of these dimensions onto a parcel and in a neighborhood where it's drastically out of scale?" he asked.

If the projects are approved, the developers hope to start construction in 2020 and wrap up work by 2021.



Plans for this building on Girard Avenue between 32nd and 33rd streets will be presented to the South Uptown neighborhood's land use committee at 7 p.m. on June 26 at Bryant Square Park. Submitted image