

# **DRAFT FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECORD OF DECISION**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET**

### **Ritz Block EAW**

**Location:** 315 Nicollet Mall, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota

**Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU):** City of Minneapolis

	<b>RGU</b>	<b>Proposer / Project Contact</b>
<b>Contact persons</b>	City of Minneapolis Becca Farrar-Hughes	Opus Development Company, LLC Matthew Rauenhorst
<b>Title</b>	Senior City Planner	Senior Director Real Estate Development
<b>Address</b>	250 S. 4th Street, Room 300, PSC	10350 Bren Road West
<b>City, State, ZIP</b>	Minneapolis, MN 55415	Minnetonka, MN 55343
<b>Phone</b>	612-673-3594	952-656-4681
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:rebecca.farrar@minneapolismn.gov">rebecca.farrar@minneapolismn.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:matthew.rauenhorst@opus-group.com">matthew.rauenhorst@opus-group.com</a>

**Final action (refer to Exhibit D):** Based on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet, the “Findings of Fact and Record of Decision,” and related documentation for the above project, the City of Minneapolis concluded the following on April 23, 2015:

1. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet, the “Findings of Fact and Record of Decision” document, and related documentation for the Ritz Block development were prepared in compliance with the procedures of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Minn. Rules, Parts 4410.1000 to 4410.1700 (2009).
2. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet, the “Findings of Fact and Record of Decision” document, and related documentation for the project have satisfactorily addressed all of the issues for which existing information could have been reasonably obtained.
3. The project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects based upon the above findings and the evaluation of the following four criteria (per Minn. Rules, Parts 4410.1700 Subp. 7):
  - Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects;
  - Cumulative potential effects;
  - Extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority;
  - Extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs.
4. The finding by the City that the EAW is adequate and no EIS is required provides no endorsement, approval or right to develop the proposal and cannot be relied upon as an indication of such approval. This finding allows the proposer to formally initiate the City’s process for considering the specific discretionary permissions necessary

for redevelopment, and for the City in this process, informed by the record of the EAW, to identify and encourage the elements for compatible redevelopment, and assure their implementation at this site.

Consequently, the City does not require the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project.

## **I. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND RECORD OF DECISION**

The City of Minneapolis prepared a Mandatory Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Ritz Block development according to the Environmental Review Rules of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) under Rule 4410.4300 subpart 19, Residential Development (D) - Greater than 375 attached residential units, and Subpart 32, Mixed residential and industrial-commercial projects with a sum of quotients exceeding 1.0, and Connected Actions or Phased Actions per 4410.1000, subpart 4. Exhibit A includes the project summary, and Exhibit B includes the Record of Decision.

## **II. EAW NOTIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION**

On February 23, 2015, the City published the EAW and distributed it to the official EQB mailing list and to the project mailing list. The EQB published notice of availability in the *EQB Monitor* on March 2, 2015, as well. Exhibit C includes the public notification record and mailing list for distribution of this EAW.

## **III. COMMENT PERIOD, PUBLIC MEETING, AND RECORD OF DECISION**

Exhibit E includes the comment letters received. The Zoning and Planning Committee of the Minneapolis City Council considered the EAW and the draft of this "Findings of Fact and Record of Decision" document during its April 23, 2015, meeting. Notification of this Zoning and Planning Committee public meeting was provided with the EAW and to all persons or agencies commenting on the EAW.

## **IV. SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTS / COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSES TO THESE COMMENTS**

The City received five (4) written comments during the public comment period on the dates identified from the following:

1. Minnesota Historical Society – State Historic Preservation Office, March 31, 2015
2. Metropolitan Council, March 31, 2015
3. Hennepin County, March 30, 2015
4. Minnesota Department of Transportation, March 24, 2015

The following section provides a summary of these comments and responses to them (Exhibit E includes the complete comment).

### **I. Minnesota Historical Society – State Historic Preservation Office**

**Comment:** “As indicated in #14 of the EAW, there are several historic properties in the vicinity of this proposed project which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) including individually listed properties as well as the eastern edge of the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District and the southern boundary of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. Although the EAW indicates that ‘no direct physical impacts are anticipated’ on these historic properties, we have no indication that consideration has been given to potential indirect adverse visual impacts caused by this new construction.”

**Response:** Noted for the record. As identified in the EAW, there are many structures listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) located within the general area. Two structures listed on or eligible for listing on the NRHP are immediately adjacent to the south of the project area. These structures are the NRHP eligible Northern States Power Company and the NRHP listed Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank. An additional five NRHP listed and one NRHP eligible structures are located within or near an approximate 500-foot buffer of the project area that include the Lakeland Floral Warehouse, Lyman-Eliel Drug Company, Lumber Exchange Building, First National/Soo Line Building, Marquette National Bank Building, and the Rand Tower. The Lumber Exchange Building, the Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank, the Soo Line Building, and the Rand Tower are also locally designated. The project area is outside of the boundary of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, located approximately 850 feet to the north, and outside of the boundary of the Warehouse Historic District, which is approximately 550 feet to the west.

The development site is located in a dense, urban, downtown setting where new and old buildings coexist and create an urban fabric. The development intensity proposed on the parcel is not unique in this setting. It is anticipated and planned for in accordance with the City's adopted policies and regulations. The environmental effects of this redevelopment can be anticipated and controlled by the City's formal land use application and regulatory processes. Further, it is important to note that City Staff and the City Planning Commission consider the context, character, and compatibility of new development.

**Comment:** "We recommend that a Phase I archaeological survey be completed prior to construction. Although there are no recorded archaeological sites in the project area, we agree that there is a potential for extant buried archaeological resources. The archaeological survey must meet the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Identification and Evaluation*, and should include an evaluation of National Register eligibility for any properties that are identified."

**Response:** Noted for the record. The applicant has been provided with a copy of the letter that includes the appropriate information should they follow the State Historic Preservation Office's recommendation to conduct a Phase I archaeological survey.

## 2. Metropolitan Council

**Comment:** "The staff review finds that the EAW is complete and accurate with respect to regional concerns and does not raise major issues of consistency with Council policies. An EIS is not necessary for regional purposes."

**Response:** Noted for the record.

**Comment:** Item 8.1- Permits and Approvals Required – "Metropolitan Council Interceptor (I-MN-310) is within the 4<sup>th</sup> Street South and Nicollet Mall rights-of-way. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street South section of the Interceptor was built in the year 1887 and is a 90 x 95 inch brick pipe at a depth of approximately 84 feet. The Nicollet Mall section of the Interceptor was built in the year 1923 and is a 36 x 66 inch brick pipe at a depth of approximately 37 feet. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating this project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment."

**Response:** Noted for the record. The applicant has been provided with a copy of the letter that includes the appropriate Metropolitan Council contact.

**Comment:** Item 9 – Land Use – “The proposed development could increase housing in the local area beyond levels previously forecasted. The City can request a higher forecast for TAZ #408 when the City and the Council next revise zonal forecasts.”

**Response:** Noted for the record.

**Comment:** Item 18 – Transportation – “The EAW describes providing full vehicle access at midpoints on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street South, without direct access to/from Nicollet Mall or Marquette Avenue. This condition is key for both our Nicollet Mall transit operations as well as our Marq2 transit operations. The Travel Demand Management (TDM) Plan, however, does not elaborate on this important point.

The TDM Plan does not include specific strategies for transit waiting areas. There are highly used bus stops on the Marquette and 4<sup>th</sup> Street sides of the site. There is also a bus stop on Nicollet Mall, which is primarily a drop-off for Route 18. There is a transit shelter on 4<sup>th</sup> Street; and on Marquette there is a Marq2 shelter and real-time signage.

There may be opportunities for new transit sheltered areas to be integrated within the footprint of the building, located behind the sidewalk to provide more available pedestrian space. There are a number of these transit waiting spaces in downtown Minneapolis that provide protection from the elements while also providing heat, light, and real time signage. Typically they have been part of TDM plans. In addition to sheltered transit space, either integrated into the building footprint or outside of it, the length of the bus stop area should ideally have a six-foot clear zone at the back of the curb to accommodate safe and efficient circulation to/from the bus. This area would ideally be free of streetscape elements such as furniture and plantings.”

**Response:** Noted for the record. The applicant has been provided with a copy of the letter that includes the appropriate Metropolitan Council contact in order to improve transit operations and facilities in the immediate area.

### 3. Hennepin County

**Comment:** “Hennepin County has no comments to submit to the Ritz Block EAW, as noticed by the EQB on March 2, 2015.”

**Response:** Noted for the record.

### 4. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

**Comment:** “MnDOT has reviewed the EAW for the proposed Ritz Block development and has no comments at this time.”

**Response:** Noted for the record.

## V. **ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE EAW**

No substantive environmental impacts/issues were identified in this EAW. A Traffic Demand Management Plan and Traffic Impact Study (prepared by Westwood) were provided for the proposed development. The results of the operational analyses indicate that under the No-Build and Build scenarios, vehicular traffic operation performs at roughly the same levels of service. The high modal share from this development significantly reduces the single-occupant traffic impact of the site, and does not significantly burden surrounding intersection congestion levels beyond their existing or No-Build conditions. There will be some queuing on 4<sup>th</sup> Street South in the future Build conditions that extends to and

slightly beyond the service drive, but these incidences are short-lived, and are typical within a downtown traffic environment.

It is important to note that City Staff has expressed strong concerns regarding the design of the site as it has not been considered in a holistic fashion. This results in two similarly designed buildings with poor urban design that incorporate above-grade parking facilities resulting in inactive floors that directly abut the public streets and adversely impact the pedestrian realm. Feedback provided to the developer is noted as follows and has not yet resulted in any substantive design changes:

- The five floors of parking fronting along Nicollet Mall are a major concern for Staff considering the prominence of this downtown development site and the fact that no parking is required for the development – the manner in which the supply of parking is provided on-site adversely impacts the design.
- Providing active functions along Nicollet Mall is a basic urban design principal that has been largely ignored by this concept plan.
- Substantial public investment is being dedicated to improve Nicollet Mall and the expectation is that development must respond to that investment. Additionally, the Downtown 2025 plan states that Nicollet Mall should be a “must see destination”. Parking located above-grade and fronting on Nicollet Mall is not a “must see”.
- The developer has control over an entire City block and has not demonstrated any alternatives to above-grade parking. While there are a number of options for re-designing the site, some options that staff has discussed with the developer include:
  - o Incorporating below-grade parking;
  - o Providing structured parking in the center of the site that serves both Phase I and Phase 2;
  - o Altering the building footprint to create additional depth, allowing for units or other active uses to front along Nicollet Mall, while still providing enough space for parking and circulation at the interior of the site;
  - o Extending floors 2-6 above grade (cantilevering over the wide drive access) to allow space for active functions along Nicollet Mall, while still providing enough space for parking and circulation at the interior of the site.

The design related issues will continue to be evaluated and discussed when formal land use applications are submitted for the site via the established regulatory processes.

Further, on page 3 of 31, the document states: “...a skyway connection is planned for Phase I over South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, which would allow direct pedestrian connection to the future Xcel Energy Building to the south.” An inadvertent omission in the document was neglecting to mention that the proposed building is also being designed to accommodate a future skyway connection across Nicollet Mall to the west in order to link to the Central Library.

## **VI. COMPARISON OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA**

In deciding whether a project has the potential for significant environmental effects and whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board rules (4410.1700 Subp. 6 & 7) require the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU), the City of Minneapolis in this circumstance, to compare the impacts that may be reasonably expected to occur from the project with four criteria by which potential impacts must be evaluated. The following is that comparison:

### **A. Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects:**

The environmental effects identified in the EAW and within the comment letters are localized and can be mitigated through the City's land use application process. The identified effects are reversible until the potential final discretionary approvals of each phase of the proposed project are granted through the City approval process. Each phase will require City approvals including but not limited to the Planning Commission, Zoning and Planning Committee and City Council.

**B. Cumulative potential effects:**

The issues identified in the EAW shall be resolved via the City's land use approval process on a project by project basis. Any potential future redevelopments within the area would be considered through the formal land use application process that has been applied to this project. The City's existing regulatory process and framework captures and evaluates development proposals not only from a Planning perspective, which encompasses community planning, heritage preservation and development services analysis, but also includes evaluations by the Public Works Department related to stormwater management, sewer design, traffic, streets, water, right-of way, etc. This has and will continue to allow the City to manage potential cumulative effects of future development within the vicinity and throughout the City as a whole.

**C. Extent to Which the Environmental Effects are Subject to Mitigation by Ongoing Public Regulatory Authority**

The City has discretionary authority through its land use approval process, and the City and State have authority through the permit approvals required for this project to address, mitigate or avoid the environmental effects identified in the EAW and the comment letters.

The City's formal land use application process is comprehensively administered by City Staff and implemented by experienced Commissions and the City Council. The City's existing regulatory process and framework captures and evaluates development proposals not only from a Planning perspective which encompasses community planning, heritage preservation and development services analysis but also includes evaluations by the Public Works Department related to stormwater management, sewer design, traffic, streets, water, right-of way, etc. Any potential environmental effects are mitigated by the City's formal development review efforts.

It is important to note that City Staff and the City Planning Commission consider the context, character, and compatibility of new development.

**D. Extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs:**

The construction of additional office and residential structures in this area follows many precedents, and is a known event with known effects. Redevelopment of this type within an urban setting is neither unique nor unanticipated. The environmental effects of this redevelopment can be anticipated and controlled by the City's formal land use application and regulatory processes.

**VII. DECISION ON THE NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Based on the EAW, the "Findings of Fact and Record of Decision" document, and related documentation for this project, the City of Minneapolis, as the (RGU) for this environmental review, concludes the following:

- I. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet, the "Findings of Fact and Record of Decision" document, and related documentation for the Ritz Block development were prepared in compliance with the procedures of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Minn. Rules, Parts 4410.1000 to 4410.1700 (2009).

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2. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet, the “Findings of Fact and Record of Decision” document, and related documentation for the project have satisfactorily addressed all of the issues for which existing information could have been reasonably obtained.
3. The project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects based upon the above findings and the evaluation of the following four criteria (per Minn. Rules, Parts 4410.1700 Subp. 7):
  - Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects;
  - Cumulative potential effects;
  - Extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority.
  - Extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs.
4. The finding by the City that the EAW is adequate and no EIS is required provides no endorsement, approval or right to develop the proposal and cannot be relied upon as an indication of such approval. This finding allows the proposer to formally initiate the City’s process for considering the specific discretionary permissions necessary for redevelopment, and for the City in this process, informed by the record of the EAW, to identify and encourage the elements for compatible redevelopment, and assure their implementation at this site.

Consequently, the City does not require the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project.

### **Exhibits:**

- A. Project Description
- B. Environmental Review Record
- C. Public Notification Record
- D. Council/Mayor Action
- E. Comments Received

## EXHIBIT A

### Project Description

The Site comprises approximately 109,173 SF or 2.5 acres of developable property along Nicollet Mall, between South 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets in Minneapolis (the “Site”). The property currently consists entirely of a bituminous surface parking lot that includes a total of 254 off-street parking spaces. The Site is zoned B4-2 (Downtown Business) District and is located in the Nicollet Mall (NM) and Downtown Parking (DP) Overlay Districts. The project is located immediately southeast of the Minneapolis Central Library.

The proposed project would be developed in two phases: Phase 1, would include 364 residential units, up to 12,000 SF of ground level retail space, approximately 430 parking spaces, occupy approximately 60,524 square feet of land and is planned for construction in 2015-2017. Phase 2 would occupy the remaining 48,661 square feet of land and would be developed after Phase 1 is complete. It is anticipated that Phase 2 could also include up to 364 dwelling units, and approximately 479 parking spaces. Alternatively, and depending upon market conditions, Phase 2 could be an approximately 365,606 square foot office tower that includes up to 146 parking spaces. The two phases of the development would be taken independently through the City’s land use, design and approval processes.

Phase 1, as proposed, would develop a portion of the development parcel that has approximately 330 feet of frontage on Nicollet Mall and extends from 3<sup>rd</sup> St. S. to 4<sup>th</sup> St. S.; encompassing the entire western half of the full city block. As currently proposed, Phase 1 includes a 32-story, rectangular-shaped building with a total of 430 parking stalls and 182 bicycle parking spaces. Five full floors of above-ground parking (2-6) are proposed and front on Nicollet Mall with a 24-foot wide mid-block access and egress proposed from 3<sup>rd</sup> St. S. and 4<sup>th</sup> St. S. City Staff has expressed strong concerns about the appearance of five inactive parking floors located directly adjacent to Nicollet Mall; the design of the building is compromised by parking that is not required. At grade parking is also located at the interior of the site. Bicycle valet and storage is intended at the north end of the building with street-level access to 3<sup>rd</sup> St. S. A commercial space is proposed at street level along Nicollet Mall, and would contain retail uses that may include a full-service restaurant with outdoor seating. As shown on the Concept Site Plan (Exhibit 6), a skyway connection is planned for Phase 1 over South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, which would allow direct pedestrian connection to the future Xcel Energy Building to the south.

Exterior materials would include architectural precast and glass elements. Features of the Phase 1 building would include walk-up retail and office space along Nicollet Mall, a bicycle valet, bike shop, dog walk on the street level, fitness and swim club, and green roof/outdoor garden spaces on the seventh floor.

The proposed Phase 2 plan, which is conceptual, could similarly be a second 32-story residential tower with up to 364 housing units and 479 structures parking stalls or a 20-story tower with 365,606 SF of office and up to 146 structured parking spaces. Unlike Phase 1, no retail/commercial space is currently contemplated for that building. A shared service drive would separate Phase 1 from Phase 2 as shown on the Concept Site Plan. As previously noted, the service drive is proposed to be approximately 24 feet wide.

Each phase would be reviewed by all applicable City Staff including Public Works and Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) staff independently. Phase 1 would require the removal (relocation and demolition) of a portion of the existing bituminous parking surface, lighting structures and pay booths, and each phase would require excavation for below grade foundation structures, although no underground structured parking is proposed as part of the development.

Plans for Phase 2 of the project are conceptual at this time and would be dictated by market conditions and demands for residential and office space. Consequently, this EAW evaluates both concepts and addresses the relative impacts of residential or office development to provide a comprehensive evaluation depending on which option is chosen for Phase 2.

**EXHIBIT B**

**Environmental Review Record for the Ritz Block EAW**

Date	Action
2/23/2015	City Staff distributes EAW to official EQB mailing list and Project List. EAW is posted on the City's website.
3/2/2015	Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) publishes notice of availability in <i>EQB Monitor</i> and the 30-day comment period commences.
4/1/2015	EAW public comment period closes.
4/23/2015	Zoning and Planning Committee (Z & P) of the City Council considers the "Draft Findings of Fact and Record of Decision" report, provides recommendation to the City Council.
TBD	City Council approves Z & P Committee recommendation and makes a finding of Negative Declaration: EAW is adequate and no EIS is necessary.
TBD	Mayor approves Council action regarding EAW
TBD	City publishes notice of Council/Mayor decision in <i>Finance and Commerce</i> .
TBD	City publishes and distributes Notice of Decision and availability of final "Findings" report to official EQB List and the Project List
TBD	EQB publishes Notice of Decision in <i>EQB Monitor</i> .

## **EXHIBIT C**

### **Public Notification Record**

The following describes the public notification process of CPED for the Ritz Block EAW:

1. The City maintains an updated list based on the Official EQB Contact List. The Ritz Block EAW project list follows. All persons on that list were sent copies of the EAW. CPED also distributes copies of the EAW to elected and appointed officials, City staff and others who have expressed interest in the project.
2. A notice of the availability of the Ritz Block EAW, the dates of the comment period, and the process for receiving a copy of the EAW and/or providing comment was published provided with each copy of the EAW and in the *EQB Monitor* and was provided to the City's CPED Media contact for notice and distribution.
3. CPED distributed the Notice of Decision with information regarding the final "Findings" document to the Official EQB Contact List and the project list.
4. The EQB published the Notice of Decision in the *EQB Monitor*.

#### **Attached:**

Official EQB Contact List

Project List

**EAW DISTRIBUTION LIST**  
**April 22, 2014**

**STATE AGENCIES**

**Department of Agriculture** (1 copy)  
Becky Balk  
625 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Becky.Balk@state.mn.us](mailto:Becky.Balk@state.mn.us)

**Department of Commerce** (1 copy)  
Ray Kirsch  
85 Seventh Place East, Suite 500  
St. Paul, MN 55101

**Environmental Quality Board** (1 copy)  
Environmental Review Program  
520 Lafayette Road North – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194  
[EOB.Monitor@state.mn.us](mailto:EOB.Monitor@state.mn.us)

**Department of Health** (1 copy, prefer electronic)  
Michele Ross  
Environmental Health Division  
625 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Health.Review@state.mn.us](mailto:Health.Review@state.mn.us)

**Department of Natural Resources** (3 copies or electronic)  
Randall Doneen  
Environmental Review Unit  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025  
[Kate.Frantz@state.mn.us](mailto:Kate.Frantz@state.mn.us)

**Pollution Control Agency** (2 copies and 1 CD)  
Craig Affeldt, Supervisor  
Environmental Review Unit – 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
500 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Department of Transportation** (1 copy)  
Debra Moynihan  
Mn/DOT Office of Environmental Stewardship  
395 John Ireland Blvd., MS 620  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Board of Water and Soil Resources** (1 copy)  
Travis Germundson  
520 Lafayette Rd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Travis.Germundson@state.mn.us](mailto:Travis.Germundson@state.mn.us)

**LIBRARIES**

**Technology and Science** (2 copies)  
Hennepin County Library – Minneapolis Central  
Attn: Helen Burke  
Government Documents, 2nd Floor  
300 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1992

**FEDERAL**

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** (1 copy)  
Tamara Cameron  
Regulatory Functions Branch  
190 Fifth St. E  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1638

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** (1 copy)  
Kenneth Westlake  
Environmental Planning & Evaluation Unit  
77 W Jackson Blvd., Mailstop B-19J  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** (1 copy)  
Twin Cities Field Office E.S.  
4101 American Blvd. East  
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

**REGIONAL**

**Metropolitan Council** (NOTE: 5 copies IF the project is in the seven-county metro area)  
Review Coordinator, Local Planning Assistance  
Metropolitan Council  
390 Robert St. No.  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1805  
[raya.esmaeili@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:raya.esmaeili@metc.state.mn.us)

**OTHER**

**National Park Service** (1 copy)  
Stewardship Team Manager  
111 E Kellogg Blvd., Suite 105  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1288  
(If project is located within, or could have a direct impact upon, the Mississippi River Critical Area/ Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. This is a 72-mile stretch of river from the mouth of the Crow River at Dayton/Ramsey to the Goodhue County border.)

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**State Archaeologist** (1 copy)

Fort Snelling History Center  
St. Paul, MN 55111-4061

**Minnesota Historical Society** (1 copy)

State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55102

**Indian Affairs Council** (1 copy)

Jim Jones, Cultural Affairs Director  
Indian Affairs Council  
113 2nd Street NW Ste 110A  
Bemidj, MN 56601

**Ritz Block EAW Project Mailing List 2/23/15**

Westwood  
Attn: David M. Weetman  
7699 Anagram Drive  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Opus Development Company, LLC  
Matthew Rauenhorst  
10350 Bren Road West  
Minnetonka, MN 55343

Council Member Jacob Frey  
Ward 3 – 307 City Hall

Council Member Lisa Bender  
Ward 10- 307 City Hall

Council Member Lisa Goodman  
Ward 7 – 307 City Hall

Minneapolis Central Library  
300 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Assn.  
40 S. 7th Street  
Suite 212, PMB 172  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Jason Wittenberg – Room 300 PSC

Becca Farrar – Room 300 PSC (**2 copies**)

Erik Nilsson- 210 CH

Allan Klugman – 300 Border Avenue

Dave Jaeger  
Henn. Co. Environmental Services  
701 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Minneapolis MN 55415

**EXHIBIT D**

**Council /Mayor Action** (to be added when the process is complete)

**EXHIBIT E**

**Comments Received on the Ritz Block EAW:**

1. Minnesota Historical Society – State Historic Preservation Office, March 31, 2015
2. Metropolitan Council, March 31, 2015
3. Hennepin County, March 30, 2015
4. Minnesota Department of Transportation, March 24, 2015

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

March 31, 2015

Becca Farrar-Hughes  
Senior City Planner  
City of Minneapolis  
250 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: EAW – Ritz Block Redevelopment  
Minneapolis, Hennepin County  
SHPO Number: 2015-1405

Dear Ms. Farrar-Hughes:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) which was reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given to the Minnesota Historical Society by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act (MS 138.665-138.666) and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (MS 138.40).

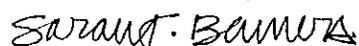
As indicated in #14 of the EAW, there are several historic properties in the vicinity of this proposed project which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) including individually listed properties as well as the eastern edge of the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District and the southern boundary of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. Although the EAW indicates that “no direct physical impacts are anticipated” on these historic properties, we have no indication that consideration has been given to potential indirect adverse visual impacts caused by this new construction.

We recommend that a Phase I archaeological survey be completed prior to construction. Although there are no recorded archaeological sites in the project area, we agree that there is a potential for extant buried archaeological resources. The archaeological survey must meet the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Identification and Evaluation*, and should include an evaluation of National Register eligibility for any properties that are identified. For a list of consultants who have expressed an interest in undertaking such surveys, please visit the website [preservationdirectory.mnhs.org](http://preservationdirectory.mnhs.org), and select “Archaeologists” in the “Search by Specialties” box.

Please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36CFR800, Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the protection of historic properties. If this project is considered for federal assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, it should be submitted to our office with reference to the assisting federal agency.

Please feel free contact me at (651) 259-3456 or [sarah.beimers@mnhs.org](mailto:sarah.beimers@mnhs.org) if you have any questions regarding our comments on this project.

Sincerely,



Sarah J. Beimers, Manager  
Government Programs and Compliance

March 31, 2015

Becca Farrar-Hughes  
Senior City Planner  
City of Minneapolis  
250 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

**RE: City of Minneapolis Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) – Ritz Block**  
Metropolitan Council Review No. 21374-1  
Metropolitan Council District 7

Dear Ms. Farrar-Hughes:

The Metropolitan Council received the EAW for the Ritz Block on March 2, 2015. The proposed project is located at 315 Nicollet Mall, a full city block in downtown Minneapolis bound by Nicollet Mall, Marquette Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposed development consists of approximately 2.5 acres for a two-phase development which, at completion, would include 728 dwelling units, 12,000 square feet of commercial space, and up to 900 off-street parking spaces.

The staff review finds that the EAW is complete and accurate with respect to regional concerns and does not raise major issues of consistency with Council policies. An EIS is not necessary for regional purposes.

We offer the following comments for your consideration.

***Item 8.1 – Permits and Approvals Required (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119)***

Metropolitan Council Interceptor (1-MN-310) is within the 4th Street South and Nicollet Mall rights-of way. The 4th Street South section of the Interceptor was built in the year 1887 and is a 90 x 95 inch brick pipe at a depth of approximately 84 feet. The Nicollet Mall section of the Interceptor was built in the year 1923 and is a 36 x 66 inch brick pipe at a depth of approximately 37 feet. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating this project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment.

***Item 9 – Land Use (Todd Graham, 651-602-1322)***

The proposed development could increase housing in the local area beyond levels previously forecasted. The City can request a higher forecast for TAZ #408 when the City and the Council next revise zonal forecasts.

***Item 18 – Transportation; and Appendix F – Travel Demand Management Plan (Steve Mahowald, 612-349-7775)***

The EAW describes providing full vehicle access at midpoints on 3rd Street and 4th Street South, without direct access to/from Nicollet Mall or Marquette Avenue. This condition is key for both our Nicollet Mall transit operations as well as our Marq2 transit operations. The Travel Demand Management (TDM) Plan, however, does not elaborate on this important point.

The TDM Plan does not include specific strategies for transit waiting areas. There are highly used bus stops on the Marquette and 4th Street sides of the site. There is also a bus stop on Nicollet

Becca Farrar-Hughes  
March 31, 2015  
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Mall, which is primarily a drop-off for Route 18. There is a transit shelter on 4th Street; and on Marquette there is a Marq2 shelter and real-time signage.

There may be opportunities for new transit sheltered areas to be integrated within the footprint of the building, located behind the sidewalk to provide more available pedestrian space. There are a number of these transit waiting spaces in downtown Minneapolis that provide protection from the elements while also providing heat, light, and real time signage. Typically they have been part of TDM plans. In addition to sheltered transit space, either integrated into the building footprint or outside of it, the length of the bus stop area should ideally have a six-foot clear zone at the back of the curb to accommodate safe and efficient circulation to/from the bus. This area would ideally be free of streetscape elements such as furniture and plantings.

We look forward to coordinating with you on the development of this site, including addressing opportunities for improving transit operations and facilities. Please contact us at your earliest convenience.

This concludes the Council's review of the EAW. The Council will not take formal action on the EAW. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Michael Larson, Principal Reviewer, at 651-602-1407.

Sincerely,



LisaBeth Barajas, Manager  
Local Planning Assistance

CC: Crystal Sheppeck, MHFA  
Tod Sherman, Development Reviews Coordinator, MnDOT - Metro Division  
Gary Cunningham, Metropolitan Council District 7  
Michael Larson, AICP, Sector Representative / Principal Reviewer  
Raya Esmaeili, Reviews Coordinator

**Farrar, Rebecca D.**

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**From:** David J Jaeger <David.Jaeger@hennepin.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 30, 2015 2:52 PM  
**To:** Farrar, Rebecca D.  
**Subject:** Ritz Block EAW, No Comments from HC

Hello Becca. Hennepin County has no comments to submit to the Ritz Block EAW, as noticed by the EQB on March 2, 2015. Thank you for the opportunity to review this report, we hope it is a successful project. Dave.

David Jaeger  
Planning, Policy and Land Management | Hennepin County Public Works  
701 Fourth Ave. South, Suite 700, MC L606 | Minneapolis, MN | 55415-1842  
direct: 612-348-5714 | blackberry: 612-396-2397  
[david.jaeger@hennepin.us](mailto:david.jaeger@hennepin.us)

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**Farrar, Rebecca D.**

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**From:** Scheffing, Karen (DOT) <Karen.Scheffing@state.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 24, 2015 9:11 AM  
**To:** Farrar, Rebecca D.  
**Cc:** Sherman, Tod (DOT); Andrusko, Andrew (DOT); Corbett, Michael J (DOT)  
**Subject:** EAW15-004 Ritz Block

Dear Ms Farrar

MnDOT has reviewed the EAW for the proposed Ritz block development and has no comments at this time. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thanks  
Karen

Karen Scheffing  
Principal Planner  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
1500 W County Road B2  
Roseville MN 55113  
651-234-7784