

CapitolRiver Council
Community Meeting on Proposed Lowertown Sidewalk Café
May 6, 2010

In attendance: Katie Sabaka, Todd Brezina, Andrew Schlack, Phyllis Voight, Kevin Brown, Patrick Heelan, Roy Meixell, Eve Fortney, Kurt Koehler, Connie Nardini, Karen McCauley, Rachel Tschida, Marian Deegan, Joe Wirth, Patty Wirth, Bob Spaulding, Pat Lindgren, Laura Henry, Terry Henry, Juanae Brooks, Tyge Nelson, Sharon Peterson, Richard Masak, John Mannillo, James Buscher, George Kremer, Pat Kremer, Roger Fuller, John LaVine, Thomas Zera, Larry McMullen, Katy Lindblad, Lynn Meixell, Michael Heelan, Brian Tucker, Frank Kozlowski, Laurie Lapore, Mary Barrett, Chuck Woodbury, Ralph Eide, Tim Leary, Greg Peterson, Bob McCullough, Tammy Lehmann, Toni Wilcox, Chris Beckstrom, Kae Peterson, Matt Lokowich, Erin Lokowich, Joe Spencer, Paul St. Martin, Larry Zangs, Julia Schlack, Jewel Hill Mayer, Sherri Kapas, Jennifer Henry, Caleb Jonas.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Schlack, A. welcomed all to the meeting, gave an overview of CapitolRiver Council, and described the process that this proposal has gone through. He noted that the original proposal was heard in January 2010 by the CRC Development Review Committee. A community meeting was held at that time and as a result, a CapitolRiver Council Task Force was formed to further explore the proposal with the City of St. Paul and ensure that resident concerns were addressed in the exploration. This Task Force consisted of several downtown residents and stakeholders and met several times, beginning in January. Schlack identified the goal of tonight's meeting to hear the updated proposal and ensure that community members have the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback. Schlack explained that after this meeting, the proposal will go back to CRC's Development Review Committee for discussion there. Input given tonight will be reported to the committee at that time. If any formal action is taken by the Development Review committee, it will then go before the full CRC Board of Directors at their May meeting.
2. Project Proposal
 - a. Joe Spencer (St. Paul mayor's office) gave an overview of the design concept, and noted:
 - i. The proposal would change the streetscape to include a 20' sidewalk, 11' bus/bike lane, 10' traffic land, and 11' traffic lane.
 - ii. Trees would be moved from the outside of the sidewalk to the inside.
 - iii. A minimum of 6' of sidewalk would be open and maintained for pedestrian travel.
 - b. Paul St. Martin (St. Paul Public Works) noted:
 - i. Impacts on parking and traffic flow
 - ii. The Central Corridor Bike Walk Plan will also affect this street.
 - iii. Metro Transit has the final say on all bus stop issues. Lee Bennett of Met Transit has stated their preference to have stops every other block in downtown, and would like this stop moved to be east of Wall St.
 - iv. The total cost of this proposal is estimated to be \$270,000. This estimate does not include work on vaults or area ways. The total amount would be paid for by property owners by assessment.
 - v. If this proposal progresses, the earliest it could get a public hearing in the City Council will be on June 16th.

- c. Chuck Repke (representative of building owners) provided comments, including:
 - i. The Business and building owners were approached by the City to participate in this proposal.
 - ii. The sidewalk café will bring people to the area.
 - iii. Business owners are willing to pay for extra security at night.
 - iv. The sidewalk is currently in horrendous shape and would be repaired as a result of this project.

3. Input from community members

- a. Resident and employee of Mears Park Place apartments expressed full support for proposal
- b. Resident and employee of Mears Park Place apartments reported that the leasing and management office is in full support of the proposal and believes that the sidewalk café will help them to sell life in Lowertown to potential residents. She also noted that the café would benefit pedestrians on 6th Street by "confining" diners to a specific section of the sidewalk.
- c. Lowertown resident asked when about the timeline if this proposal were to move forward. St. Martin responded that with Council approval, the sidewalk café could conceivably be built in three weeks, beginning sometime this August. Resident commented that the removal of parking meters would have a negative effect upon downtown businesses and community.
- d. Phillip Voight, property owner in the Rossmor, expressed strong support for proposal and commented that a sidewalk café would raise property values and revenue, would increase on-street activity and therefore be a crime deterrent, and that parking garages would provide ample parking opportunities.
- e. Laura Henry, River Park Lofts resident expressed opposition to the proposal, stating that a sidewalk café would increase undesirable people and activities to the Lowertown Street and Mears Park.
- f. Terry Henry, River Park Lofts resident expressed opposition to the proposal, stating that public money should not fund projects with a private benefit. He stated his belief that the loss of projected revenue from the removal of parking meters would be more than currently estimated. He stated that the City should prioritize rec centers and parks over sidewalk expansions that benefit liquor establishments.
- g. Marian Deegan, River Park Lofts resident expressed support for the proposal and noted that a city must have a vibrant arts scene and nightlife in order to attract successful businesses. Successful businesses increase property values and quality of life.
- h. Chuck Woodbury, River Park Lofts resident, expressed his and his wife's full support of the proposal.
- i. Betty Herbert, long time downtown resident and retired real estate agent, expressed full support for the proposal.
- j. Karen Caton, downtown resident, asked City representatives to detail how the adjoining blocks would be affected. Spencer and St. Martin explained that 3 meters would be lost on the other side of Wacouta, and 3 meters would be lost on the other side of Sibley. Caton expressed strong opposition to the proposal and stated that the City would be taking public space and making it private, noted that 6th Street is a thoroughfare for trucks, and said that she feels the sidewalk café would be the destruction of a neighborhood.
- k. Jewel Hill Mayer, Mears Park Place resident, expressed support for the proposal and recommended that the City install some sidewalk poetry on 6th Street.

- l. Matt and Erin Lokowich, River Park Lofts residents and owners of The Bulldog Lowertown, expressed support for this proposal. Matt noted that the sidewalk café would benefit everyone and that traffic noise on 6th Street is louder than the sidewalk café noise would be. Erin noted that money earned by the businesses goes back into the community.
- m. Sherri Kapas, owner of Gopher Bar, expressed opposition to the proposal and noted that LRT construction causes traffic congestion that is already a deterrent for visitors to come to downtown Saint Paul, her opinion that additional construction would add to that problem, that her business does not get any money from the City. She also pointed out that the estimated revenue loss for the removal of parking meters does not seem to include parking ticket revenue.
- n. John Mannillo, downtown employee, pointed out that Minnesota weather would cause the sidewalk café to only be usable for a few months of each year and suggested exploration of a seasonal sidewalk café. John said he is also the Chair of Friends of Mears Park and noted that businesses and buildings on that block are successful because of the park and should donate to the Friends of Mears Park.
- o. Jennifer Henry, River Park Lofts resident and Securian employee, expressed support for the proposal and noted that it would add to the vibrancy of downtown, add to her quality of life, and bring more visitors into the neighborhood.
- p. Caleb Jonas, River Park Lofts resident expressed support for the proposal.
- q. Michael Heelan, Great Northern Lofts resident, expressed support for the proposal and noted that he and his wife chose to live in this neighborhood because of its interesting, urban environment.
- r. John Lavine, On the Park Condominiums resident and former Mayor and commissioner, noted that governments have been giving public space for private use since the dawn of the republic. He noted that this would be setting a potentially dangerous precedent.
- s. Toni Wilcox, River Park Lofts resident, expressed support for the proposal. She noted that pedestrians should take priority in planning and suggested that if there is a lack of parking or traffic congestion, that perhaps it would inspire more people to walk.
- t. Patty Wirth, downtown resident, expressed support for the project.
- u. Patrick Heelan, Fitzgerald Condominiums resident, expressed support for the project and pointed out that the sidewalk expansion would widen the pedestrian path from 4' to 6'.
- v. Pat Lindgren, aide to Councilmember Dave Thune, asked if residential buildings across Sibley and Wacouta Streets would be assessed for the work that would happen outside their buildings. St. Martin said that no construction or assessments would affect them; just painting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Overview of feedback received from residents unable to attend meeting

I have received input from a total of 32 residents on this issue and would like to give an overview of the comments submitted, as the residents are not able to be here tonight.

By phone and email, I heard from 17 downtown residents who expressed full support for this project with no concerns or questions. Many noted that the vibrancy of a sidewalk café will enhance Lowertown, Mears Park, and downtown as a whole and noted that they would be excited to welcome more visitors to their neighborhood and help support the bars and restaurants along 6th Street.

By phone and email, I heard from 6 downtown residents who expressed full opposition for this project. Reasons for opposition, beginning with those that were noted the most often, were: removal of 22 parking meters, removal of bus shelter and possible removal of bus stop, noise issues, traffic congestion, and litter.

Finally, by phone and email, I heard from 9 downtown residents who expressed support for the project but included concerns, which were overwhelmingly in regards to the bus stop and removal of parking meters.

I have compiled the written feedback that I've received and have copies for everyone on the panel.

Katie

I strongly support the proposal for changes to 6th street south of Mears Park.

The idea sounds good to me; the two businesses already open have added a lot of zest to Lowertown. In fact, I just came home from spending a little of Tuesday night in each of them.

Katie

I'm 100% for this expansion. I live in RPL condos and think that any additional businesses in the lowertown district benefit all the residents. We certainly need to support new restaurants, revitalizing this area is a must if we wish to see increases in property values.

My husband and I have lived in Denver, Co and enjoyed the walking area right in the middle of the city, would love to see that happen here with Mears park at the center. Philadelphia dedicates one night per week as vehicle free which was very successful in bringing people together.

Thanks for your work and we really hope the expansion goes forward.

Katie,

Thanks for the information and the request for input. I am an Airye condo resident in unit 3504, which overlooks the park. I may not be able to attend the meeting on next Tuesday so I would like to provide input via email. My wife and I think this is an excellent idea. I believe there are currently only three or four parking spaces on the north side of sixth street in that block, so the change would be drastic and the benefits would be great. It is exciting to see this activity in Lowertown, especially given the current economic situation. I am hoping that someone decides to open a restaurant on the south side of the park on the southeast corner of Fifth and Sibley streets.

I fully support the proposal.

I take the bus and use that bus stop. It would be ok going a block further to the stop in front of Mears Park apartments.

What about the mail box? I use the mail box a lot. Would that be relocated at least within a block of where it is now?

I'm all for new business and enjoy both the Barno and Bulldog. My main concern is the litter that they create with their sidewalk seating. Neither business has been very good about cleaning up spilled food, cigarette butts, napkins, etc. It's usually quite a mess in the morning and then stuff gets blown around. If strict enforcement of keeping the sidewalk clean is part of the plan - then I'm all for it.

Katie

The first email was written by [spouse], this is my input. I concur that having a sidewalk café is a great idea but am concerned about parking. There is little enough as it is without more leaving otherwise I love the idea.

I am a resident of On the Park Condominiums. Thank you for asking for our input. We residents try to keep an open mind and see both sides of this: vibrancy vs liveability. So I have mixed feelings after reading your e-mail. This project sounds like it will involve major overhauls: trees, light poles, bus shelter and probably stop shift in traffic lanes, not to mention the loss of parking spots. Parking is already an issue, is there an alternative for the spots being taken away?

Other concerns include: there is already so much noise now with continuous increased use of Mears Park for various functions, including increased late night noise when patrons leave the businesses at closing. Remember, other than Park Square Court building, the other three blocks surrounding Mears Park are residential. Also, downtown is already a torn-up mess with preparations for light rail underway.

I'll be curious to learn details, including what kinds of compromises will there be, planned hours for sidewalk cafe to be open and target date for it, etc. Thanks again and hope to see you at the meeting.

I am supportive of this change. As a resident of RPL that overlooks Wacouta Street, my one concern is the additional noise after ~ 10PM if patrons were still able to sit outside and be served at that time.

I must say that while this idea is somewhat appealing, I do not support the loss of parking on both sides of the street. If this can be achieved using only the parking spots on the north side of 6th street, I might support it. I like the idea of some neighborhood entertainment activity, but do not want to completely lose the residential neighborhood feel of Mears Park. I am a volunteer gardener at the park, and enjoy the green space we have in our neighborhood. I fear giving up parking on both sides of the street changes the complexion of the neighborhood.

Dear Katie Sabaka:

I wanted to express my support for the idea of widening the sidewalk for businesses along 6th St in between Wacouta and Sibley.

As a resident living in the River Park Lofts, I have been excited to see Lowertown's growth. Healthy businesses, like these restaurants, help to keep our neighborhood vibrant and safe.

While widening the sidewalk will affect the amount of street parking available, I am confident that the city can recoup lost revenue of fees from parking meters and tickets in sales taxes from increased sales taxes. Widening the sidewalk will also create strong infrastructure on a "human level" that will support businesses and increase street traffic, an investment in the future of the neighborhood. As someone who lives with a front row view of the intersection at Wacouta and 6th, I frequently hear car horns and near accidents as vehicles exit the freeway on Wacouta and then are confronted with parallel parkers as they turn on to 6th Street. Removing this obstacle may also result in increased traffic safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to give input.

We are advised that there is a proposal before you to support the elimination of meter parking on 6th Street between Wacouta and Sibley so that the sidewalk on the north side of this block can be widened to accommodate sidewalk cafes.

As residents of the neighborhood, in fact we overlook Mears Park and the specific sidewalk in question, we oppose this proposal for the following reason:

1. As the two existing restaurants well know, parking in the area is limited at best. The elimination of this parking will even adversely affect to two existing restaurants.

2. 6th Street is a principal entry point into downtown St Paul from the off-ramp of I-94 westbound. Narrowing this block will cause substantial traffic congestion for the morning commute into St Paul.
3. Who will pay for the proposed widening of the sidewalk? This is not stated, and we hope it is not the taxpayer.
4. And who will pay for retuning the sidewalk to its original configuration, if and when any of the restaurants fail? The restaurant business is notoriously prone to failure as peoples tastes and neighborhoods change.
5. The surrendering of public space for private gain is poor public policy if there is not a significant quid pro quo. We do not see such.

We are not opposed to sidewalk cafes. We enjoyed them in Europe long before they became popular in the United States. We still do.

I'm all for it. Living in RPL I've become very happy having Barrio and Bulldog move in, and to add patio seating would be a huge benefit to those restaurants overall appeal. As of right now, a lot of times during the summer we end up going to other bars for the sole reason of outdoor seating. If we had the option of outdoor seating near those restaurants, we'd be more likely to stay in the area.

Katie, thanks for asking for feedback from River Park Lofts.

We all appreciate the change in atmosphere that these establishments have brought to the Mears Park area. Barrio and the Bulldog have contributed to the area through their support of summer festivals and other events. Whatever small downside they have brought is more than counterbalanced by the good they have brought to the area.

The concern many in RPL have is the past attempt of the landlord of these properties to move the bus stop in front of RPL as one step in making her property more valuable. RPL residents have pointed out the health concerns for our residents on the first two floors where bus exhaust would be emitted directly into their living spaces.

We have dealt with this exact issue at least twice in the three years that RPL has been open. I hope we don't have to cover that territory again. Certainly it wouldn't be a good business practice to alienate potential customers by making their good fortune our misfortune.

I do support the expansion, but with one exception, our RPL neighbors do NOT want the bus stop moved back in front of our building. The exhaust fumes were a real health problem. The city agreed and moved the bus stop to its current location.

Please do not move it back in front of the RPL building or many of us will be unable to support the expansion.

Katie, I think that an outdoor cafe on 6th street is a great idea. It is wonderful to see some new entertainment options in lowertown. Now if we could just get that stadium for the Saints built, lowertown could become a new uptown (like in Minneapolis). St Paul is a great city it just needs a little more night life. Thanks

Yes, I am definitely for it. It will bring events, people, action, excitement, fun opportunities to lower town. Perhaps one day we can even get Calmer Theater to reopen and have a grocery, too - wouldn't that be perfect?

Is there a way to slow down traffic...and eliminate the bus from going by this area (patio/6th street)? If this is going to be an outdoor patio for diners, then the last thing they want is the sound of cars (bad mufflers, squeaky brakes, loud engines, etc) and the sound and smell and soot from a bus accelerating from the stop light.

It's not a pleasant area to dine/drink if the noise cannot be controlled. Maybe turn the whole street into a plaza like Nicolet. Or offer dining in Mears?

This is just my two cents.

Who do I have to persuade to open the movie theaters in Galtier? It just kills me to go all the way out to Inver Grove Heights for movies. When I go to movies, I like to dine/drink nearby. It would be ideal to dine/drink at the downtown restaurants on the way over to Galtier for a movie. I think the local restaurants could offer deals for Dining/Movie goers.

Seriously...This theater needs to open to make downtown more viable for residents. Any news on the St. Paul Saints Stadium moving downtown?

There are some people in our building that are concerned that the bus stop will be relocated to in front of River Park Lofts. I would be opposed also. I think the bus stop in front of The Bulldog can be eliminated. People who live further than RPL (i.e. down near the Blackdog) already have multiple stops in their area. For us in RPL and the Cosmos - the extra half block walk to Mears Park Apartments is very doable.

Many people are concerned about increased traffic and pedestrian safety. I'm also a dog owner, so I'm out several times a day crossing the street. In my experience, when streets are made narrower - enlarged sidewalks, bumpouts, etc. - this actually helps to slow traffic down. I believe if you check with those in the city who study traffic patterns, they can show you research that a visibly narrower road causes drivers to slow down. So the sidewalk cafe would be a plus in this regard.

There are also people upset that things are changing in lower town. I find it hard to fathom that anyone would move to a city environment and expect that it will never change, grow or contract. Forward growth is good - it keeps the city viable and our values up. Stagnation which leads to contraction will drive our values down.

Lastly - can our friendly dogs be welcomed in the sidewalk cafe, just as in Paris? We are so looking forward to this!

I live in downtown Saint Paul in Gallery Tower. I've been in downtown for more than ten years and really love this community.

I absolutely support the proposal to create a sidewalk cafe in Lowertown and hope it will happen and be ready for the public by spring 2010!

I love the vibrancy and charm of the Mears Park area and the growing nightlife there. I think the sidewalk cafe would be fantastic and draw even more people to downtown, helping to support current and future businesses, and creating an even richer nightlife. I know I would be over there even more often than I am now. What a phenomenal idea!!

I was in Italy a few months ago and one of the most enjoyable things to do in their towns and cities was to sit outside at sidewalk cafes by a park or open space and watch the people going by, look at the stars, look at the trees and fountains, enjoying good food and conversation, etc.

Outdoor cafes are really wonderful and invite people to take time and enjoy life. Saint Paul already has some European charm as it is, but cultivating a sidewalk cafe area in Mears Park would take us to a higher level. The parks in downtown (Mears, Rice, the future Pedro, etc.) should really be cultivated more and more to make our city stand out as a fun and inviting place to live in or visit. I'm really excited about what we have already and the great potential to make our downtown even more vibrant, beautiful, and enjoyable. Creating this sidewalk cafe would be a huge step forward!

I believe all of our parks ought to have sidewalk cafes!

I would even go one step further and suggest that ALL of Sixth Street should be filled in, connecting the park completely with the sidewalk cafe area in front of the restaurants, creating more space for people, little music ensembles, artwork, fountains, more trees, etc. But I'm sure that would be considered too crazy at this point... However if you look at the ancient city of Verona, Italy, they did something very similar, changing several streets over to pedestrian-only to create a large 'promenade' area for the public to walk up and down between the cafes and their city park. It's a glorious place to be! We can have more charm like that, too! Kudos to the people who suggested this idea!

We are not available to attend the meeting on 05 January 2010 but want to add our strong support to the proposal to add a sidewalk café on 6th Street between Sibley and Wacouta Streets. We feel that this would be a great addition to our neighborhood.

Our only concern is the loss of the bus shelter and bus stop. We are residents of the Cosmopolitan and the stop is very convenient for us. Perhaps the stop could be moved back to the corner of 6th and Wacouta Streets (across from the Cosmopolitan) where it used to be a few years ago.

Cosmopolitan Residents

Hi Katie,

I am unable to attend the community meeting tomorrow on the proposed Lowertown Sidewalk Café, but would like to offer up my comments. I am generally supportive of the proposed wider sidewalk, including the loss of parking meters on that block. However, I oppose removal of the bus shelter and/or bus stop. At least nine bus routes run down 6th Street (I personally use many of them) and for most of the routes, the block between Wacouta and Sibley is Lowertown's closest access point. We should not do anything that decreases residents' access to public transit.

River Park 601's Resident

I am contacting you to voice my opposition to the proposed sidewalk cafe. It seems that St. Paul needs to make a decision as to whether Lowertown is going to be a residential neighborhood or a commercial district. Recent decisionmaking does not seem to take into account that Mears Park is surrounded by residential buildings where hundreds of people live.

Proposals such as this fail to take into account the parking, transportation, and noise problems that they create. This particular proposal is amazing in that it would make permanent changes to parking and bus routes that residents would have to live with year around, while a sidewalk cafe in Minnesota will be open at best 4 months out of the year. I have lived in Lowertown since 1986 when Galtier Plaza was the big thing. I think we all know how that turned out.

I have three major objections to this proposal:

1. This proposal would eliminate 22 parking spaces. Parking is in increasingly short supply in Lowertown. The increase in bars in the neighborhood has street parking almost impossible for guests of residents who live in Lowertown. Ramps are not readily available, and safety is a concern. I was robbed within one block of my apartment a year ago, so I am very careful where I recommend that visitors to the neighborhood park. I have elderly parents who love to visit me, but are unable to walk long distances to their car and are concerned about their safety after dark. The crowds that frequently block the sidewalks outside the Bulldog do not inspire confidence. If the city intends to eliminate parking in Lowertown, I would propose that every parking spot that is eliminated be replaced by multiple new parking places in a safe location within easy walking distance of the residential buildings on Mears Park.
2. This proposal would move or more likely eliminate the bus stop that is currently on 6th Street between Wacouta and Sibley. As someone who moved downtown to take advantage of public transportation this is especially aggravating. I frequently travel on business and have to catch the bus to the airport between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. Increasing the distance to the bus stop raises safety as well as comfort issues with longer walks in winter. This is not the first time a bus stop has been moved or closed in the immediate vicinity of Mears Park. No value seems to be placed on the convenience or safety of those of us who utilize public transportation, although accessibility to public transportation is touted as one of the benefits to living in the neighborhood.
3. My final objection is that this would bring even more noise to the neighborhood on weeknights. The seating at the Bulldog is directly across the street from 2 residential buildings. Since many people like to open their windows in the warmer weather they will be treated to street noise until 2:00 a.m. Every summer brings new proposals to bring more events to Mears Park for more evenings of the week and later hours. Apparently the city and

neighborhood businessowners don't understand that those of us who live around Mears Park are entitled to some quiet enjoyment of our homes in the summer months and have jobs to get to in the morning that require us to be able to go to sleep prior to 2:00 a.m.

The owners of the businesses who would benefit from the changes being requested were aware of the limitations of this location when they established their businesses. To request such significant, permanent changes to the neighborhood that would impact residents all year for a few months of financial gain for themselves, is not very neighborly. Based on the longevity of many bars, it does not seem to be a very wise move to make significant, permanent changes that will negatively impact residents and provide no public benefit.

Cosmopolitan Resident

I have lived in Lowertown for six and a half years (at the Great Northern for most of that time) and wholeheartedly support the changes to 6th to allow sidewalk cafes. It is just the sort of thing we need.

Great Northern Resident

As a resident of Lowertown in the Great Northern Lofts, I would love to see the concept of a "sidewalk cafe" on 6th Street across from Mears Park go forward. My wholehearted endorsement!

Great Northern Resident

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed sidewalk cafe on 6th Street across from Mears Park. I used to live on the park side in the Cosmopolitan Apartments. Despite loving Lowertown, the Cosmo and my apartment, I moved out last August because the noise from Barrio made my life extremely unpleasant. The acoustics around the park are such that I could hear people sitting at sidewalk tables even though my apartment was a half block down Wacouta. (Customers at Barrio tend to get much noisier and more inebriated than customers at the Bulldog, as I never had a problem until Barrio opened.) When the sidewalk tables were open I typically could not sleep through the night without being disturbed by drunken patrons from Barrio. Expanding the sidewalk cafe will degrade the quality of life for many Lowertown residents. The sidewalk cafe would be dominated by Barrio customers because they are a much noisier clientele than customers at the Bulldog or presumably the Bin Wine Bar. Realistically, it would not be likely that someone could sit and quietly enjoy a glass of wine and a salad when people at adjacent tables are having tequila shots and pitchers of margaritas.

In addition, eliminating the bus shelter and possibly the bus stop would remove a convenience and amenity that belongs to the public, and this loss would be made only to profit a small number of businesses. I used that bus stop and shelter on a daily basis when I lived at the Cosmo and considered it an important benefit to living in Lowertown. Because there are so many events in Mears Park, this is an important bus stop.

The loss of parking is another major concern for Lowertown residents, people who shop at the Farmer's Market, and event organizer (like Art Crawl, Lowertown's signature event). Parking is already scarce in Lowertown. It is hard to see how the loss of parking spaces can benefit anyone.

Lowertown has been a successful residential community for some time (when the real estate bubble burst, Lowertown property values still went up). Decisions regarding the quality of life in the community should be weighed in favor of residents first and a handful of business owners second. Although I no longer live in Lowertown, I visit it regularly to shop at the Farmer's Market, attend Art Crawl, and enjoy the area in other ways. My husband, an employee of Gray, Inc., now works in Lowertown, so that gives us an additional reason to come to the area frequently. It has long been a part of St. Paul that is special to me, as it is to so many others.

For many reasons, I strongly oppose the plan to expand the sidewalk cafe. On your handout under the heading "The proposal" you neglected to mention the overwhelmingly obvious fact that what this would mean is dramatically increased noise for Lowertown residents and those who use, care for and enjoy Mears Park.



