

I am writing as a business owner with a small office in Lowertown, as well as a resident of CityWalk, a condominium located in downtown Saint Paul. I am also a member of the YMCA located in Lowertown. I have lived in Saint Paul for 35 years.

Reducing the number of parking spaces in Lowertown is a bad idea for several reasons:

* At the present time, there is one municipal parking place available for 148 Saint Paul residents, compared to one municipal parking place available to 57 Minneapolis residents. There are, therefore, almost three times as many municipal parking places available to those who live in Minneapolis compared to those who live in Saint Paul. The often voiced complaint that there is "no place to park" in downtown Saint Paul has a basis in fact. To the hundreds of municipal parking places lost due to the construction of the light rail, the present proposal to remove additional municipal parking places appears to be nonsensical.

* At a time when municipalities all over the U.S. are considering abolishing free Sunday parking because of their desperate need to increase revenues, the proposed loss of municipal parking places in Lowertown will reduce revenues to the city of Saint Paul, not increase them. We can ill afford to subsidize the three or four businesses in question by reducing city revenues from which ALL residents of Saint Paul benefit.

* The proposed plan to reduce the number of municipal parking places in order to benefit three or four businesses, and perhaps those who own private parking ramps in Lowertown, is discriminatory. As a small business owner with an office in Lowertown, I will suffer because of the lack of municipal parking spaces in and around my office. The needs of those who live and work in Lowertown would be sacrificed to the supposed benefit of a handful of businesses if the number of municipal parking spots in that area were to be reduced.

* Downtown Saint Paul is home to approximately 8,000 residents many of whom are aged and/or handicapped. The loss of these specific parking places will make it more difficult for those who have mobility difficulties in accessing services, such as the YMCA located in Lowertown.

* The loss of municipal parking spots in Lowertown in order to facilitate more sidewalk tables for three or four bars/restaurants in Lowertown creates a marginal benefit to them and a significant loss for others. These additional tables will, after all, only be used for perhaps four months out of the entire year.

* The proposed change includes changes in the available sidewalk, the flow of traffic, and another piece of Saint Paul chipped away. The proposed change should be considered within the context of the city of Saint Paul brand. What does Saint Paul evoke? A city that reconfigures its streets and the flow of traffic in order to benefit perhaps six business owners? Where is the public benefit in this proposal?

* The use of the word "promenade" in the proposals to widen the sidewalks in order to facilitate the above mentioned tables is not appropriate in this context. The word "promenade" means to walk or stroll. I fail to see how walking or strolling would be facilitated by a sidewalk covered in tables. In this context the word "promenade" is a euphemism used to make palatable a significant loss to those who work and live in Saint Paul. It suggests a benefit where there is none.

The city of Saint Paul has labeled itself as America's most "livable"

city. A livable city has a long-term perspective on the visual appeal of its city and how it impacts on those who visit and live there, including where they will park.

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