

WARD 6 SUSTAINABLE BUILDING Ord 17-60  
JANUARY 22, 2018

Councilman Bostrom. When the Saint Paul City Council votes this Wednesday on Ordinance 17-60 it should amend the legislation to not delete, from the existing law, Green Globes as one of the approved green building standards.

I am writing to you from Maryland because this ordinance has garnered national attention because eliminating from use, Green Globes, a green building rating system widely utilized in the Twin City metro area and across the country sends a covetous and wrong message.

The work product of an advisory committee of experts, [Ord 17-60 Sustainable Building Regulation Ordinance](#), alters and amends the [2009 Resolution to Implement Saint Paul Sustainable Building Policy](#). The existing law was well received and was the subject of several prior blog posts that applauded the effort to make Saint Paul “the most livable city in the United States.”

The existing law has had some efficacy. There have been about 5 projects a year since 2009 falling under the law and while there are less than 50 projects in total they range from single family homes to a ball park.

The modest usage is not surprising because by design, the law only applies to: new construction of facilities owned or operated by the City of Saint Paul; new construction of facilities that the City will become the sole tenant; and, new construction of any facilities within the City of Saint Paul receiving more than \$200,000 of City funding.

Commercial projects falling within the law must achieve a “Sustainable Building Standard means any of the following: . . . LEED New Construction (NC) 2.2 Silver or Green Globes 2 globes or State Guidelines Building Benchmarking and Beyond (B3) or Saint Paul Port Authority Green Design Review.”

But in what might be described as some Rube Goldberg tinkering with the existing law, the committee of experts, recommended this legislation delete Green Globes as an option. The rationale expressed at the January 17, 2018 public hearing was that no one in Saint Paul has used Green Globes to comply with the law, so “there was a lack of interest” such that it should be eliminated.

And while such may be technically accurate, it is not correct where there are nearly 40 buildings in the Twin City metro area that are certified by Green Globes and more pursuing certification, including the Xcel Energy Center and a new Whole Foods supermarket. If the City Council tries to pick winners and losers removing Green Globes as one of the options, such may or may not present real antitrust issues, but it is downright anticompetitive and only hurts green building, including in a year when a new version of Green Globes is being released.

After a review of green building rating systems by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratories in 2012, Green Globes has been accepted for federal government building use. Over 100

localities and 23 states currently accept Green Globes for green building projects. This is not about if Green Globes green enough.

This ordinance will make Saint Paul more and darker green. The biggest change in that not only new construction, but now also major renovations, being 10,000 square feet renovated space with replacement of mechanical systems are subject to this law.

Additionally, this ordinance is that it updates and makes very green the Saint Paul Overlay, the compilation of mandatory requirements on top of complying with a Sustainable Building Standard. The overlay will now require: 2% of energy needs to be met on site through renewable energy; that projects be electric vehicle ready (including prewiring); it will include a resilience component, that is a tool for developers to identify “shocks and stressors” a building may encounter and potentially alleviate; and it will require tracking actual water use.

And then, without public explanation the committee recommends adding the USGBC’s Parksmart as a new Sustainable Building Standard. Of course, this would become necessary if Green Globes were eliminated where Green Globes certifies parking structures, but LEED stopped certifying parking structures some years ago. There is nothing wrong with Parksmart, the problem is when a local government removes competition from the marketplace.

Shakespeare described envy as the green sickness. There is nothing wrong with Saint Paul desiring to be the most livable city in the United States, including through green building, but this ordinance now on third reader has garnered national attention because eliminating from use a green building rating system widely utilized in the Twin City metro area sends a covetous and wrong message.

Moreover, given that in 2018 there will be new versions of LEED, ASHARE 189.1, IgCC, ICC 700, and Green Globes, it may be desirable that City Council consider the Sustainable Building Regulation again, including expanding the number of Sustainable Building Standards, sooner rather than later.

Admittedly, with history of controlling 5 projects a year, this ordinance will not save the planet, even with a corrective amendment adding back in Green Globes, but the power of the mindset should not be underestimated and the City should be seen to be strengthening sustainable building requirements, not the opposite.

The updated law is proposed to take effect on July 1, 2018, so there will be no disruption in Saint Paul’s desire to be more green by amending the Ordinance 17-60 to not delete, from the existing law, Green Globes as one of the approved green building standards. Thank you.

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