

Dear :

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Lowertown neighborhood. I appreciate hearing from you.

Over the past several weeks, residents from the Lowertown neighborhood have been gathering to discuss the effect of the Lowertown ballpark in downtown Saint Paul and, specifically, concerns related to both the demolition of the Diamond Products site and the availability of parking for residents and visitors. I am hopeful that my reply today will address many of the concerns you have and will provide you with an explanation of why I believe this project - as planned - is vital for the future of Saint Paul, and Lowertown specifically. **I believe that it is important we build a first-class facility that we can all be proud of.** Simply put, after repeated review and study of the site by city staff, consultants and other experts in the field, there remains no viable option for reuse of the Diamond Products building if the ballpark project is to move forward.

Best practices in baseball facility design dictate that a baseball field should be northeast to southeast in orientation and the design that has emerged over the past three years has responded to this practice. There are many other effects of reorienting the design to maintain the former Diamond Products building structure: accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act compliance), mechanical systems, space restrictions, pedestrian and vehicular access, visual connections to the Bruce Vento Nature sanctuary and bluffs and FAA regulations could all be negatively affected by a redesign. Planning for a ballpark with capacity for thousands of fans with a such a limited space makes our ability to maintain any part of the Diamond Products structure nearly impossible, certainly too costly, and compromises basic ballpark 'best practice' design fundamentals.

The city has received numerous studies, letters and documents from numerous consultants and engineers agreeing that the preservation of the Diamond Products is untenable. The most recent study, which looked specifically at reusing the building for underground parking, estimated the additional costs for underground parking in excess of \$12 million and revenue figures from the additional parking spots falling far short of what would be needed to service the additional debt.

I am fully aware that this project will have two significant impacts on parking – one generally for the neighborhood and another specific to the Markethouse condominiums. First, the Lowertown neighborhood will lose parking spots because of the ballpark. Because of this, we've asked several experts to examine the impact of the ballpark on Lowertown parking supply. Every time, studies have shown we have ample existing parking to accommodate the ballpark, residents and visitors to the neighborhood. In fact, a recent study shows as many as 4 times the amount of parking required to accommodate fans. And, of course, the Green Line will begin operation in 2014 bringing thousands of fans to the ballpark via light rail transit. Fundamentally, I remain confident that the assessments of the experts are correct and that the market will respond to any parking needs.

I remain grateful to the residents of Markethouse for their patience as we continue to address their parking situation. We know this is a change for residents and it is important that the city take an active role to help solve it. We are currently working with a downtown parking lot owner to determine availability of replacement spots for the Markethouse. In the end, I am hopeful the city will have an option on the table for the Markethouse condo owners.

The public is an important participant in the design and construction of the ballpark. While this project has been pursued over the past 3 years, there have been countless community discussions related to the ballpark. In fact, the public process is so essential that we worked with the Capital River Council to create the Lowertown Ballpark Design and Construction Committee (LBDCC) to help us make sure the ballpark enhances and fits into the neighborhood. The LBDCC has already met 5 times, most recently on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 to address various ballpark related questions, concerns and input on how the ballpark can best fit into the neighborhood. This new ballpark *will* be a great addition and I believe strongly that the neighborhood, the city and fundamentally, the project can do better than forcing a ballpark to fit into a dilapidated cement façade.

This project is truly a community investment – a project that will have far-reaching, positive effect for years to come. I believe that having this facility downtown, will expand the opportunities for public use far beyond what is provided at the existing Midway Stadium. I am confident that our existing partners like the Winter Carnival will fully utilize the facility. And, in the "fun is good" spirit of the Saints, many ideas for new seasonal events and activities will certainly emerge.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we move forward with the Lowertown Ballpark project. Please visit www.lowertownballpark.com for updates and more opportunities to provide input as this project moves forward.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, feel free to contact my office at 651-266-8510. Thank you again for your inquiry.

Sincerely,

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