



Historic Rondo

Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee

c/o Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation ~ 774 University Avenue ~
St. Paul, MN 55104 ~ 651-222-0399

April 20, 2011

To: Council Member Melvin Carter
From: The Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee
Subject: **Support for your Central Corridor Zoning Amendments**

Our committee has met and deliberated on your amendments to proposed changes regarding the Central Corridor Zoning Ordinance. While concerned there was no agreement on each of our height/density recommendations, we nonetheless believe this policy action to be a step in the right direction and therefore support your zoning amendments.

In communications with you and your legislative aide, we understand that the remainder of our outstanding issues can and will be addressed within other facets of the city's policy-making apparatus. And as we understand it, some of our concerns are currently being followed up on as follows:

PBHRC Outstanding Issues (see attached letter 4/6/11 for details)	Council Member Carter's Directive
Alley usage as thoroughfares	Instructed the city to go back and conduct a traffic analysis where policy recommendations will first come through the Planning Commission for further adoption by the City Council. <i>Note: PBHRC recommends that this be done within a 3 month timeline.</i>
Neighborhood Parking Pressures	Instructed the city to go back and conduct a neighborhood parking analysis where policy recommendations will first come through the Planning Commission for further adoption by the City Council. <i>Note: PBHRC recommends that this be done within a 3 month timeline.</i>

"Revitalization without Displacement: Lifting People out of Poverty and not out of the Neighborhood"

Mixed use housing & commercial affordability in new development	<i>Note: while PBHRC has not heard directly from Council Member Carter on this matter, in conversations with ISALAH we understand that Stark and/or Carter may this Wednesday put forth a resolution instructing city staff along side community stakeholders to design an Anti-Displacement Action Plan within the next 6 months to get at housing affordability concerns. <u>Please clarify and/or elaborate.</u></i>
Thorough neighborhood process at the district council level	<i>Note: while this point was not further discussed with Council Member Carter <u>we would like our follow up conversation to determine greater support to neighborhood district council's in helping impacted residents learn about, understand and engage around city lead area of change/CCLRT related initiatives that could help inform deeper work within District 8 to strengthen their neighborhood design standards given impending redevelopment along the Central Corridor that would impact their neighborhood.</u></i>

In a spirit of government/community cooperation and partnership we would like to meet with you in the coming weeks to follow up on each of these concerns as well as deepen our discussions on the “trade offs” you’ve mentioned, as this understanding is off yet not a shared viewpoint. In the meantime, please feel free to make any corrections or clarifications on the above matters.

Once again, members of the **Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee** will speak in favor of your zoning amendments at today’s hearing.

Thank you for considering our concerns and likewise, we too look forward to constructive engagement.

If there are further questions please contact our Cultural Organizer/Policy Advocate, Veronica Burt @ univa-veequity@yahoo.com or call 651-774-5977 (h)/612-386-2101 (c).

The Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee & Supporters:

Leetta Douglas – Resident
 Deb Montgomery – Resident
 Mychael Wright – Resident
 Gloria Massey – Resident
 Carolyn Brown – Resident
 Marquitta Ransom – Resident
 Rev. Gill – Pilgrim Baptist Church
 Donald Walker – Resident/Central Village Assoc.

Lori Mitchell - Resident
 Betty Charles – Business Owner, Shear Pleasure
 Arnellia Allen – Business Owner, Arnellia’s
 Nick Khaliq – St. Paul NAACP/Resident/Business Owner
 Dennis Presley – Aurora St. Anthony NDC
 Metric Giles – Community Stabilization Project/Resident
 Veronica Burt – Cultural Organizer/Policy Advocate



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April 6, 2011

To: City Council/Mayor's Office

From: The Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee

Subject: **Postpone Adoption of a new, Central Corridor Permanent Zoning**

For almost 50 years, the St. Paul African American community stretching east/west from Lexington Blvd. to Rice Street and north/south from University to Marshall centered its activities along Rondo Ave. which served as the major artery uniting the economic, social and political aspirations of its residents. In the early 60s, nearly 650 homes, businesses and community institutions along the Rondo corridor were tragically uprooted displacing nearly 2,000 families to make way for the I-94 freeway. Soon afterwards, government supported urban renewal initiatives ushered in suburban style development that replaced what's now seen as fashionable old world charm homes, further dislocating members of our community

Considering that I-94 and subsequent urban renewal initiatives left permanent scars on the well being of our community, concerned community members not wanting a repeated transportation investment and revitalization misdeed, have vigorously since 2004 identified and tried to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to the historic African American Rondo community. We've consistently raised concerns of businesses interruption, residential rent and tax increases, parking problems, displacement/gentrification threats and increased isolation of historic Rondo at numerous meetings of the Metropolitan Council, the City of St. Paul and other government partners.

To this time better protect our community, an African American base of concerned and impacted community members formed the **Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee (PBHRC)** involving residents, business owners and long standing community based organizations. The mission of our committee is to advocate for a "Rondo Renaissance" to ensure the preservation, enhancement, restoration and healing of the social and economic fabric of the historic Rondo Community. We value "revitalization without displacement: lifting people out of poverty and not out of the neighborhood". **For if light rail and area revitalization is to occur, it must be done in a way that minimizes costs and maximizes benefits to our community as it would be a shame for the government to be careless and inconsiderate implementers of yet another large scale transportation project and area revitalizing initiative.**

After reviewing the St. Paul Planning Commission's final recommendations re: Response to Public Hearing Testimony and Committee Recommendations – Central Corridor/Traditional Neighborhood Zoning Study, the following are still outstanding concerns which PBHRC would like City Council/Mayoral Support on at the conclusion of the April 6, 2011 City Council Public Hearing:

"Revitalization without Displacement: Lifting People out of Poverty and not out of the Neighborhood"

- **While the city conducted informal open houses, a thorough neighborhood process at the district council level has not occurred informing residents and soliciting input on the proposed zoning changes.** **Concern** – Many residents are uninformed of the proposed zoning changes that will impact the landscape of their neighborhood. **Solution** - postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward. Specifically, insure that the city mails out rezoning notifications to all residents located within a ¼ mile radius of the rezoning area; insure the city provides to the neighborhood district council’s zoning specialist to explain the complexities of “zoning” in general and the proposed zoning measures specifically; insure the city appropriates the necessary level of funding to support neighborhood outreach ¼ of rezoning area to solicit community feedback; allow for ample time for this thorough neighborhood process to take place.
- **Too much Density & Height still being proposed within the historic Rondo boundaries South of University Ave. from Lexington to Rice – with mostly T3 preferences and some T2 at Lexington, Dale and Western intersections.** *(Note: T3 = 2 stories min.; 45-55 ft. max. [about 3-4 stories] plus distance set back from side/rear setback lines; up to 90 ft with a CUP {8 stories}. T2 = 35 ft. [about 2-3 stories] max plus distance set back from side/rear setback lines; up to 45 ft with a CUP if within 600 ft. of a transit stop).* **Concern** – Residents don’t want taller buildings that overshadow, obstruct ones view across University, box us in and intrude into the single family neighborhood fabric considering we are only 4 blocks deep - landlocked between I-94 and the new rail system. **Solution** - postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward. Specifically, instruct the city to go back and work with the affected district councils and perform a Neighborhood Density & Height Analysis to not burden the single family neighborhood fabric.
- **Still concerned that alleys being used as a thoroughfare create multiple problems and exacerbating quality of life matters.** **Concerns** – increased traffic volume of cars needing to park behind businesses and delivery trucks now needing to use the alleys to make deliveries creating an access burden and increasing the potential for accidents as residents try to enter & exit their garages; increased costs for alley maintenance, lighting, signage and backyard fencing and an increased burden of coordinating among businesses and residents to provide for snow removal; exacerbated health concerns brought on by increased auto emission considering the southern side of the avenue is currently plagued by a high rate of Asthma due to I-94 proximity. **Solution** - postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward. Specifically, instruct the city to go back and work with the affected district councils and perform a Neighborhood Traffic Analysis to not burden the neighborhood with outside traffic pressures.
- **Still there are concerns about neighborhood parking pressures.** **Concern** – residents and visitors of the new dense building designs, park-n-hiders wanting to hop the rail, customers and employees of University Ave. businesses will want to park in our neighborhood due to the loss of parking on University given the fact that we are already overburdened by outsiders parking in the community from existing complexes in the neighborhood (i.e. the Hub Center, Rondo Library and more). **Solution** - postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward. Specifically, instruct the city to go back and work with

the affected district councils and perform a Neighborhood Parking Analysis to not burden the neighborhood with outside parking pressures.

- **A concern that Zoning is not allowing for the incorporation of mixed use housing and commercial affordability in new development projects especially within our area.** **Concern** – we realize that with an increase of density and market rate developments of condos and high price rental units we will lose the affordability of our community that could create an economic hardship for many who are currently of low, working class and on fixed income creating an economic and gentrification further fragmenting our community which experienced a displacement affect in past. **Solution** - postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward. Specifically, instruct the city to go back and work with the affected district councils and perform a Commercial & Mixed Income Residential Affordability Analysis (@ 40% – 80 AMI) to support the Economic Development Opportunity and Housing Affordability of current residents through the zoning code.

Recommendation:

Given these above set of concerns we would like the City Council to extend the temporary Overlay District and postpone adoption of a new, permanent zoning for the corridor until residents are more closely informed and engaged at the district council level and neighborhood quality of life concerns are thoroughly identified, researched and resolved before moving forward on a major rezoning initiative.

We look forward to your support. If there are further questions please contact: Veronica Burt, Cultural Organizer/Policy Advocate – univaveequity@yahoo.com or call at 651-774-5977.

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