

**From:** [Missy Thompson](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_Contact-Council](#); [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward1](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward2](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward3](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward4](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward5](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward6](#); [#CI-StPaul\\_Ward7](#)  
**Cc:** [Daniel Lupton](#); [Claire Wahmanholm](#); [Emilia Mettenbrink](#); [Dan Roth](#); [Daniel Chouinard](#); [Elena Esters](#); [Gar Cell](#); [Jason Patalonis](#); [Simon Jette-Nantel](#); [John Sularz](#); [Laura Kindseth](#); [Martin Lacey](#); [Jennifer Lacey](#); [Patty Voje](#); [Peter Carlsen](#); [SARPA Board](#); [Tom Darling](#); [WENDY SURPRISE](#); [Wiley, Mary](#); [cathy maes](#); [Sam Isaacson](#); [Wendy Caucutt](#); [Ann Schroder/Nick Marcucci](#); [Dan Cornejo](#); [Robert Roscoe](#); [Larry Millett](#); [Gause, George \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [Galatz, Eric](#); [Diane B. Galatowitsch](#)  
**Subject:** Please Reject Applicant Appeal of HPC Decision re: 540 Portland  
**Date:** Friday, January 22, 2021 5:05:08 PM

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Dear Councilmember -

Last October I contacted you about the lack of public notice, lack of access, and lack of transparency in regard to Heritage Preservation Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals public hearings that resulted in approvals of a three unit townhouse project proposed for 540 Portland Avenue. I want to thank you for sending the project back to the HPC for another hearing on December 14th which, after much public testimony, resulted in denial of the project, with the request that the developer meet seriously with the neighborhood. The Council, two days later, also requested that the developer meet with the neighborhood. He has rebuffed the request of the two neighborhood organizations that reached out to him, preferring to appeal the HPC denial.

The developer never met with neighbors in over a year that this project has been in the works. The first meeting with neighbors was not a “design input” meeting in response to neighborhood opposition, rather an informational meeting so neighbors could get a first look and understand what was being proposed. The second meeting on September 26th allowed for questions and comments. The developer then apparently walked around the Ramsey Hill neighborhood on that Saturday afternoon with a sketch of the project and signup sheet on a clipboard to elicit positive responses.

The revised design consists of minor items such as changing the color of the garage doors, and shifting dormers to align with the walls of the house. There is nothing related to historic preservation, nor to the six required variances, including lot coverage, height, width, parking issues etc. This doesn't indicate “the applicant made a thorough effort to listen to the neighbor's concerns”.

The December 14th HPC public hearing actually allowed the Commissioners to hear from the public, including several experts in historic preservation, and, for the first time, take their comments into consideration, and reconsider the original vote. *There was no public testimony in support of this project.*

There are two other issues that have been brought up in various hearings about the project, that I'd like to address:

First, this project does nothing to address affordability. The units are large and are surely beyond the reach of most who hope to rent or own in the neighborhood. It is not clear for whom this project is designed. The building's height makes (in part because of the car lifts) the stairs exceedingly daunting. From car to kitchen takes twenty one stair risers. This is not a place for seniors, nor is it a project for families with children.

And second, in regard to neighborhood density, please note that the two Summit Avenue

properties (533 Summit and 545 Summit) that flank the proposed project each contain five housing units. That entire block of Summit is primarily multi-unit. Our Portland block is similar, and includes large apartment houses, rowhouses, and a twelve person recovery home. We do not oppose a smaller scale project, but this is not a spot to squeeze in three oversized units that need six variances.

In light of the developer's unwillingness to follow the directives of both the HPC and the City Council to work with the neighborhood, as well as the well- documented disregard of Historic Preservation design guidelines, I ask you to deny the Sullivan appeal of the Heritage Preservation Commission's December 14th decision.

Respectfully,

Missy Staples Thompson  
548 Portland Avenue