

From: [KAREN BELLING](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Reconstruction project
Date: Tuesday, April 15, 2025 4:22:52 PM
Attachments: [St Paul.docx](#)

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have written a letter expressing concerns about the 2025 City Reconstruction Project. I am sending it as an attachment. I will drop a signed copy in the mail soon. Thank you for your attention.

Karen Belling
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1345 Avon St N
St Paul, MN, 55117

City Clerk
15 W Kellogg Blvd, 310
St Paul, MN 55102

April 15, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I can understand that the City of St Paul wants to keep the streets and sidewalks well maintained and looking beautiful. However, I am writing to express my concerns about how the 2025 City Reconstruction Project is being handled.

I am 82 years old. I have lived in St Paul since 1974. I own my own home on Avon St N. I now live alone on a meager income with Social Security that I supplement minimally by still working a few hours. Medical bills constitute a huge portion of my income. I have about enough savings to take me thru as long as I live simply. In spite of my low income, I believe I am in better shape than many families that have debt and big mortgage payments.

Information about this project has been available but only minimally promoted. I was not aware that I would be receiving a \$10,000+ bill until the notice came in the mail. What a shock! Along with many of my neighbors, I am in grief about many of our big beautiful trees coming down. With their disappearance, so did the squirrel condos and the disappearance of many birds to our viewing. Small trees will not invite the wildlife we had grown accustomed to. Gone are the woodpeckers, the owls. We did not want this, and the biggest grievance is the feeling that we had no voice.

I am surprised that a project of this magnitude was not up for referendum so people would be better informed and given information about what the price to us would be by proceeding with this action. My impression is that people are not really troubled by the existing streets but would support reconstruction if 1. Trees could be left alone and 2. It were paid for by current taxes. Property taxes have also now gone up, making them among the highest in the state.

Votes for more curbs and sidewalks would be mixed. People I know would rather have had the trees than the curbs; sidewalks are optional. The thought that the city is not walkable without more sidewalks is incredulous if you look at other cities. People in the suburbs walk on the streets all the time. My favorite street to walk on had been Parkview near the lake. A feeling of well-being came from its overarching canopy of old trees. Destruction of them showed complete disregard for residents wishes, was negating to our draw to nature, and is antithetical to

concerns about the environment. What trees are next? How many more neighborhoods will grieve their loss? More concrete and less trees and less birds is progress....? If you insist on proceeding, find a better way to do it. A truly progressive city would find a creative way to restructure that amplifies the presence of what natural resources we have left. Use your designers and arborists in a way that helps us reclaim that.

Peoples' objections are amplified by the double whammy of forcing on us a huge new bill. The country is in a state of inflation, with a recession possible. We are living in a time of high crime rates, many homeless people, others losing jobs, moms with kids seeking food in parking lots, and many families struggling paycheck to paycheck. A project such as this is a pipe dream that disregards all of that. The message that the city is not concerned about these things does not get lost. St Paul used to have a home town feeling to it. At this point council members and the Carter administration are disconnected from the people. You are simply....out of touch. The city joins a chorus of dissent people feel about government in general.

There should have been a referendum for this project. Since there wasn't, we are forced to accept it. It's too late to save the trees in our neighborhood. "If approved" is a joke now that they are gone. The message has been given that you are proceeding no matter what people say. So, if you want it, if you think the city needs it, you pay for it. It should be based on a tax base for the whole city, not individual homeowners, included in existing taxes, and not a special assessment. The country has become increasingly aware of how much pork is built in government budgets. Figure it out in a way that shows St Paul recognizes the reality of many peoples' lives and concern about our lack of faith in what you are doing.

Removing the special assessment and reconfiguring the rest of this project would restore faith in council members willingness to listen and community participation in new projects. St Paul could heal some of its anguish, anger, and distrust, and move forward in ways that are more important than how it looks.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Karen Belling

651-645-5805

CC: Twin Cities Pioneer Press, opinion page