

From: [Jason Patalonis](#)
To: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#)
Subject: in support of the appeals against 540/542 Portland Avenue triplex development
Date: Wednesday, October 28, 2020 12:36:12 PM

City Council-

I am a life-long resident of St. Paul and a 30-year resident at 506 Portland Avenue. Having bought and restored an old property, I consider my efforts exemplary at improving both housing stock and increasing the tax basis. I am also very involved in the neighborhood having served on the board of The Ramsey Hill Association on and off these past 20 years helping to improve the quality of life for many in this community. I feel it is important for you to understand the level of investment I have made in my neighborhood.

I was very disappointed to learn of the proposed triplex development at 540 Portland Avenue. The HPC meeting announcement I was sent just days before it was scheduled had been the first news of this project since an initial pre-application review before the HPC back in February. By this time, it had been given full approval by the SUPC and pre-approval by the HPC. Many of us who joined that HPC meeting met with technical issues and had trouble commenting. A meeting with the architect was held giving him an opportunity to hear the numerous concerns we neighbors had. Despite these concerns, they were dismissed and HPC gave their full approval. As you will see in the meticulously prepared appeal by Gar Hargens and Missy Thompson, the design is seriously flawed. And no one knows this process better than Gar having served as a previous HPC chair as well as an architect himself. I am not an architect so will refer to his findings and say 'DITTO'.

To further show a lack of city transparency and commitment to citizen involvement, the BZA hearing had been scheduled for the same day, just a half hour apart making it impossible for many of us to participate in both meetings. And then we learned that emails sent to both the HPC and BZA had not been included for their review. To quote another neighborhood architect- "needing 1 variance should make a developer think twice about the appropriateness of a project but to need 6 should stop him in his tracks". My understanding of variances is that for a given project there are situations where it makes sense for the bigger picture to grant it and allow development to proceed. But if 6 are required, does that not say this is the wrong project for that location? I am concerned about drainage and lack of green space, congestion as a possible maximum of 8-10 cars will use the same 8' wide driveway, a Summit oriented home with a Portland address and finally the real parking implications. Portland is a south side park only street. It is unrealistic to think that the residents of 540 Portland will use the garage lifts consistently thereby forcing more cars on to the street as well as those of their visitors.

In conclusion I want to say that I am not opposed to development or to greater urban density projects. It should be the right project for the right space. I see an opportunistic developer trying to make a quick buck at the expense of the neighbors and taking advantage of a movement in the city to create more tax base at the expense of quality of life. Years ago, I wanted to install a vintage looking sliding glass door from my kitchen to my back porch. The HPC refused to allow it citing it was not historically appropriate. As a new homeowner I was disappointed and quite frankly angry with that decision. Over time I have come to not only accept and understand it but appreciate it. Ramsey Hill is a shining

example of historical preservation and architectural integrity. If my door was deemed inappropriate, please help me understand why this project was not deemed inappropriate.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Patalonis
506 Portland Avenue

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