

Dear Mr. Thune, Mr. Carter, Mr. Tolbert, Mr. Stark, Ms. Brendmoen, Mr. Bostrom and Ms. Lantry,

We have been residents of River Park Lofts since August of 2006. Since that time, we have had reason to be both enthusiastic in the progress of the Lowertown Neighborhood and dismayed at the some of the inconsistencies in the planning. There are many factors that were considered in our choice of Lowertown for our home. The proximity to beautiful Mears Park, the Farmers' Market and the Skyway, which enables walking to shopping at Macy's, many different dining experiences, dentists, banking, Post Office, Library, sports and theatre venues, all in any kind of weather. In addition to the fact that this is a very walkable city center, both inside and outside. Public Transportation is good and getting better with the coming of the Light Rail and Union Depot transformation.

Since our arrival here from Michigan there have been many changes. Macy's and the River Room, Eisenberg's, Blink Bonnie, the Convenience Store on the Skyway, the Costume Shop have all left. The Bulldog, Barrio and Bin Wine have been mostly positive elements in terms of adding vibrancy and opportunities for dining. They have been assets in bringing people into the Lowertown Neighborhood.

The residents of Lowertown do not have lobbyists working in our behalf. What we do have going for us is our rather high property taxes, that the city depends on for its running, the business support that we generate and our votes. We were under the impression that the City of St. Paul was interested in fostering a neighborhood and in bringing more and more residents into the area. There is a major trend in this country for all ages toward urban living, with establishing neighborhoods which include services of many kinds for its residents. While it may be true that many go to shopping malls for many reasons, those who move downtown generally would like to take care of many of their routine needs within walking distance of their apartments and condos. That is certainly a trend that will aid in less use of vehicles that cause pollution and depletion of resources.

If we continue to make St. Paul only a destination for those outside, while that is also a trend worthy of our efforts, we don't want to drive residents away. The new Saints Ballpark is an example of something that many of us residents thought would be good for the area, bringing in families to an affordable and community oriented venue. Much like the Lansing Lugnuts Ball Park, which when brought to Lansing, Michigan in our former state, revived a blighted area and brought with it many dining and entertainment opportunities and condos to the Riverfront. We have recently learned that many residents who supported the Ballpark will be losing their parking spaces.

This all seems like a digression from the issue of the Sidewalk Expansion on Sixth Street, but it really is not. On Seventh Street there are wider sidewalks and nice plantings in some areas, but no restaurants. That probably is due to the fact that there is no view of beautiful Mears Park, a park that is as lovely as it is because many neighborhood volunteers spend countless hours keeping it that way. That fact and the many entertainment events and wonderful ambience that attracts daily visitors, workers and residents, all of whom frequent the restaurants around the

park. This proposal tells us that the park is not enough, there must also be a European-style promenade.

We needn't state the obvious- that St. Paul is not Europe. We don't have huge numbers of tourists. If we look at the fact that there are relatively few days in the year when outdoor dining is really optimum. The winter months, the tornado and severe thunderstorms and summer days that are too hot to sit outside on the pavement. That space has hundreds of buses go by daily, along with traffic that comes off of two major highways. If it is for outdoor smoking, that doesn't make it pleasant for pedestrians and other non-smoking diners. In addition, the proprietors of those businesses have very little control over what is going on out on their sidewalk. The residents already experience the effects of alcohol on some patrons, but it would be far worse if this comes to pass. Our first floor residence and garden-level folks already have problems with late-night party buses and the party horns and shouted obscenities in a no-parking zone.

It seems to many residents that we have been good neighbors to these businesses and we would like that goodwill to be reciprocated. If the Council makes decisions on the basis of those that provide the best situation for the most people, it seems like a no brainer. There are so many more negatives than positives to this question. It would benefit a relative few to the expense of the many.

It would displace the present traffic grid; in heavy snow accumulations the piles would further narrow the already narrowed street; taking away the buffer of parking on the Mears Park side could make it less safe for children visiting the park; it would most likely bring back the already settled bus stop issue (should not be at a corner where residents are here 24/7 and 365 days a year, nor where the Skyway access does not exist as it does in its present location); many parking spaces would be lost in an area that has lost many already and pedestrians already have a difficult time crossing safely in this very busy area.

Much could be done to improve the sidewalk on Sixth Street without widening it. New sidewalks, a more attractive bus shelter, some nice plantings and/or urns would all make the restaurants more attractive at their entrances. We welcome those changes, more businesses in the area, and a more vibrant Lowertown. We hope that the City Council will look very closely at this proposal and at a long-range plan that is suited to residents, as well as visitors.

We are unable to attend the Council Meeting on Wednesday, due to a previous commitment, but wanted to voice our opposition to this proposal.

Very truly yours,

Barbara and Larry McMullen  
River Park Lofts, #107