



May 5, 2020

Dear Mayor Carter and members of the St. Paul City Council:

We are writing, collectively, to provide public comment regarding the Interim Capital City Bikeway design on 9th Street and 10th Street, specifically on the segment between Jackson and Wabasha containing the Robert Street intersection. While we have had a number of meetings with city staff and Councilmember Noecker, we feel written communications to all decision-makers is important at this time.

We have operated our small businesses and non-profit for many years in our part of downtown St. Paul. We are proud of being able to provide hospitality and services to many residents and customers. We are invested in making St. Paul a thriving downtown with vibrant, street-level retail that provides important jobs and creates sales and real estate tax revenues that can support other parts of the city. In addition to owning our businesses, many of us also own our physical storefront real estate – showing the strength of our commitment to downtown St. Paul.

Being in an active downtown also means making sure there are a variety of transportation options for residents and our customers. We support a robust transit system and have watched and supported the planning for future projects and transportation investment. The challenge is making sure all of this work is done in coordination to create the best plan and take fully into account how these projects will impact all stakeholders.

We have a number of significant concerns related to 10th Street Bikeway. Downtown St. Paul retail was already difficult, and there are now additional challenges – such as elimination of customer parking – just as we are struggling to survive the current economic impacts from COVID-19. In addition to the bikeway, Ramsey County's proposed Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit

project, with a stop at 10th and Robert, will also dramatically remove on-street parking which negatively affects our businesses and organizations.

As a result, we strongly oppose the location of the 10th Street Bikeway as it removes needed on-street parking near important small businesses and organizations, and turns an important access street into a one-way. We request the St. Paul City Council delay the bikeway stripe implementation on 10th Street this summer because of accessibility and economic concerns.

At a time when we need to keep every St. Paul business and organization operating, this proposed bikeway will make it harder for people to access our businesses and creates an additional and unnecessary challenge. There may be a time when it makes economic sense to activate the 10th Street Bikeway --- but now is not that time.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS WITH LOSS OF ON-STREET PARKING

- Changes in on-street parking: There are currently 65 on-street parking spots for one block around Robert and 10th Street for this important retail destination. The first proposals of the St. Paul Bikeway and Rush Line BRT would have removed 100% of on-street parking. The current proposals, after advocacy by our organizations, remove 40 of the 65 spots (resulting in 25 remaining on Robert and 10th) for 38% of current availability – and 62% of on-street parking would be lost. **This will make it more difficult for every customer and clients to access our locations, and it is anticipated they will patron our businesses less frequently.** We know this, because we surveyed our customers – and saw how the loss of on-street parking on Jackson Street (due to the bikeway) also negatively affected our clients and our businesses.
- Keys Café, Sawatdee, Camp Bar, Tin Whiskers Brewing, and Black Sheep Pizza surveyed 783 customers in January and February, 2020. We found:
 - 74% said they would not come to our businesses or would be much less likely to come, if parking removals move forward as planned.
 - About 80 percent of customers travel to the Rossmor Building retailer by car. Two-thirds – 66% - of the customers who drove used on-street parking on Robert Street. The availability of street parking is critically important in deciding which restaurant they patronize.
- Accessibility for MCIL and customers: Accessibility is crucial to clients of the Minnesota Center for Independent Living. Clients and visitors often use Metro Mobility services and are in wheelchairs or walkers. These clients need to access the street entrance. MCIL has a federal mandate to serve those living with disabilities, and the construction changes that are planned for the streets around the Rossmor Building would directly interfere with that federal mandate. In addition, these clients and many senior citizens frequent Keys Café and other retailers on the Rossmor block. Longer walking distances to parking is challenging or impossible.

- Accessibility for carry-out/delivery: Lastly, a very large and fast-growing (and currently – ONLY) part of the food retail business is takeout and delivery – such as through carry out or services like BiteSquad and UberEats. Customers picking up – and delivery drivers – require close and quick access to our building, and street parking is a necessity. This is a growing trend in the restaurant industry, which has been grown even faster during the Stay at Home order which allows people to maintain social distance. Currently, this is our only way to stay in business. Eliminating or dramatically reducing this option with less on-street parking would be extremely harmful to customer accessibility and our businesses.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR THE CITY AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Changing priorities for the City of St. Paul: We understand the needed demands on the City of St. Paul budget, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. With changes in priorities over the past months, **we believe spending taxpayer revenue on a “want” rather than a “need” for its citizens is not justified.** Even if the city decides to move forward with repaving 10th Street, this will lead to additional disruptions to residents and businesses during the construction timeframe, at a time where businesses can least afford any additional hardship and uncertainty. **We ask that even if the paving continues this summer, that the bike lane striping be delayed as a non-priority item as a way to mitigate continued negative pressure on residents and businesses, so on-street parking can remain.**
- Economic impact of the small businesses: The retailers in the Rossmor building, specifically, pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes and millions of dollars in wages. From just the five businesses of Keys Café, Camp Bar, Black Sheep Pizza, Sawatdee, and Tin Whiskers Brewing – as of January, 2020:
 - \$489,799 was paid sales tax in 2019
 - \$74,757 was paid in property tax in 2019
 - An estimated \$2,257,612 was paid in yearly wages.
 - 120 people were employed - and in a survey of employees, none plan to use BRT or bike lanes to commute to work.

We have worked cooperatively with city and other stakeholders to look at any and all opportunities to mitigate our concerns on the loss of on-street parking for the bikeway long before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted us all. Right now, our businesses are either completely closed or existing with few staff to provide limited carry-out services. We’ve had to lay off staff and are completely focused on finding a way to keep our businesses operating at a time when it is almost impossible to predict what the next few months – and the next few years – will bring.

We are now forced to make the important, yet complex decision about the future. Do we try to continue to operate our businesses, not knowing when customers come back, what our costs will be, and what taxes and other expenses will be? With all of that to take into account, the

impact of losing more parking may not seem as significant, but to us creates one more challenge at a time of such significant uncertainty.

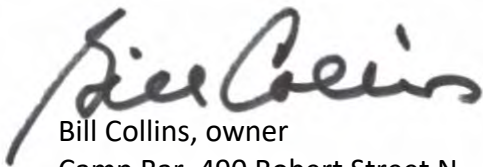
We hope for re-opening, and keeping the on-street parking is a small but extremely helpful way of keeping a thriving downtown St. Paul.

Thank you,

Carol Hunn-Gregory, owner
Keys Café & Bakery St Paul
504 Robert St N, Downtown St Paul

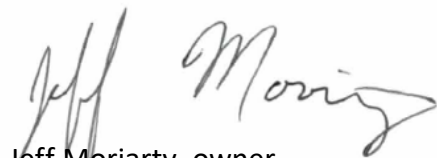


Cyndy Harrison, owner
Sawatdee Thai Restaurant
486 Robert Street N, Downtown St. Paul



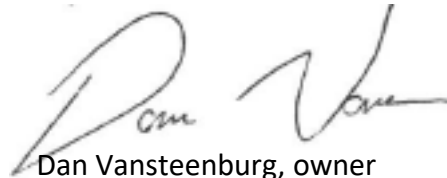
Bill Collins, owner
Camp Bar, 490 Robert Street N
Downtown St. Paul

Jesse Bethke Gomez, executive director
Minnesota Center for Independent Living
(MCIL)
530 Robert St. N, Downtown St. Paul



Jeff Moriarty, owner
Tin Whiskers Brewing, 125 9th St E
Downtown St. Paul.

Jordan Smith, owner
Black Sheep Pizza St. Paul, 512 N. Robert St.
Downtown St. Paul



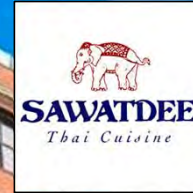
Dan Vansteenburgh, owner
Jimmy John's, 519 Jackson Street
Downtown St. Paul

Carla Sherman, owner
Chelsea Morning, 132 10th Street E
Downtown St. Paul

Carla Solberg Sherman
Como Lake Bed and Breakfast
1205 West Como Boulevard
St. Paul

Enclosures – 3 pages

What is the Impact of the Rossmor Retailers?



Sales Tax Paid

\$489,799



Property Tax Paid

\$74,757



Yearly Wages Paid

\$2,257,612



Employees

120

(48 full time, 72 part time)



Employees who travel to work by bus or light rail

21



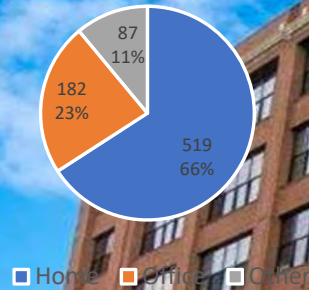
Employees who plan to use Rush Line BRT or bike lanes

0

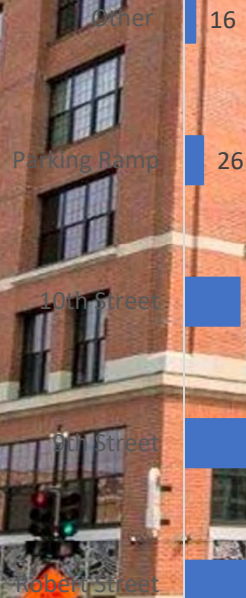
Rossmor Retailers pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes, millions of dollars in wages, and employ over 100 people. They make this downtown St. Paul's most successful retail block.

How are Customers Traveling to the Rossmor Building?

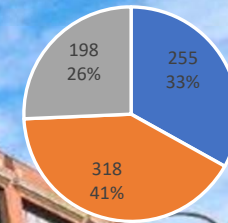
Where did you travel from today?



If you drove, where did you park?



How would having to park and walk two or more blocks from our business impact your ability to come to our business?

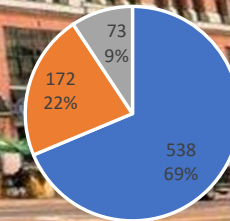


Legend:
■ Would not come
■ Would be less likely to come
■ Would not impact me

How did you travel to our restaurant today?



How important is it for you to have parking close to a business or restaurant when making a decision to shop or eat there?



Legend:
■ Very important
■ Somewhat important
■ Not important

What is the Impact of the Rossmor Retailers?

| | \$ Sales Tax Paid | \$ Property Tax Paid | \$ Yearly Wages Paid |  Employees |  Employees who travel to work by bus or light rail |  Employees who plan to use Rush Line BRT or bike lanes |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|---|
|  black sheep <small>COAL FIRED PIZZA</small> | \$119,470 | \$8,582 | \$490,767 | 25 <small>(12 full time, 13 part time)</small> | 6 | 0 |
|  Keys <small>FAMILY OWNED EST. 1970 CAKE BAKERY & MORE</small> | \$150,000 | \$17,000 | \$720,000 | 30 <small>(20 full time, 10 part time)</small> | 2 | 0 |
|  YCamp <small>BAR</small> | \$68,500 | \$22,867 | \$181,256 | 13 <small>(1 full time, 12 part time)</small> | 0 | 0 |
|  SAWATDEE <small>Thai Cuisine</small> | \$85,310 | \$11,730 | \$493,589 | 30 <small>(7 full time, 23 part time)</small> | 13 | 0 |
|  TEN WHISKERS <small>BREWING COMPANY</small> | \$66,519 | \$14,578 | \$372,000 | 22 <small>(8 full time, 14 part time)</small> | 0 | 0 |
| Total | \$489,799 | \$74,757 | \$2,257,612 | 120 <small>(48 full time, 72 part time)</small> | 21 | 0 |

A survey of Rossmor Retailers shows that they pay **hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes, millions of dollars in wages, and employ over 100 people** (most of which **do not** use public transportation or plan to use Rush Line BRT or bike lanes)