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Dear City Councilmembers:

The District 1 Community Council would like to express our enthusiastic support for the submitted Gold Line Station Area Plans. These plans embrace many of our hopes and visions for how the Gold Line will be built out and how the areas around the stations will change with that investment.

We have heard from many of our residents that their economic opportunity is restrained, and their household transportation budget is burdened, by the lack of reliable, easily-accessible transit opportunities. The Gold Line will begin to address this issue by connecting our district to jobs and destinations within Saint Paul and elsewhere in the region. The Station Area Plans address how best to connect our most transit-dependent residents to this line.

Additionally, we also hear how difficult it is for our residents to move through our community by foot and by bike. The division created by I-94 particularly hinders movement. The Station Area Plans address many concerns we have in the I-94 corridor and improve the sidewalk and bikeway network near the Gold Line.

The Station Area Plans also detail our vision for the future redevelopment of our district and the types of uses and designs we hope to see. Our neighborhoods will be significantly enhanced by the development of walkable, transit-oriented buildings and districts that serve both our residents as well as acting as a destination for a broader regional audience. The proposed rezonings will encourage mixed-use developments that will bring additional residents to our district, diversify the housing options in our district, and provide many amenities within a walkable distance of where people live.

Finally, we would like to specifically emphasize our support for the concepts and zoning recommendations for the Sun Ray area. We understand that Sun Ray will not be redeveloped en masse, and that redevelopment will be driven by the private market based on market conditions. However, the principles detailed in the Station Area Plans illustrate the type of walkable neighborhood center that we have long desired for Sun Ray. We feel that it is important to make zoning changes now, rather than waiting for the construction of the Gold Line, as we want all incremental developments moving forward to reflect our ultimate goal of being walkable, dense, and transit-oriented. To allow future developments to conform to current zoning would be a missed opportunity to achieve that goal.

We want to thank the staff from Planning and Economic Development for their extensive work over a compressed timeframe. They reached out to hundreds of East Side residents and truly captured the vision that many in our community hold for our future.

Sincerely,

Paul Sawyer
President, District 1 Community Council