

Mayor Carter and City Council Members-

My name is Margaret Etta Meyer and I live at 9th Street Lofts, 225 9th Street East, in downtown St. Paul. I moved to this building 16 years ago, as one of the original owners, and now serve on our homeowners association (HOA) board of directors.

This building originally housed McGill Warner Printers, where both my Grandmother and Great Grandfather worked, roughly from the late 1800s through the 1920s. I grew up on the East Side of St Paul, as did my Dad and Grandma, and always loved downtown St. Paul. I raised my family in Mounds View, then moved to the northeast quadrant, which is walking distance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), where I worked for many years. After retiring, I was recruited for our HOA board of directors, which I agreed to do with the understanding that I would try to make the building smoke-free. I succeeded in 2018 with excellent technical support from Kara Skahan at Live Smoke Free: Smoke-Free Housing and Rachel Callanan at the Public Health Law Center.

I am very pleased that the St. Paul City Council is considering a smoking policy disclosure ordinance. Having worked in MDH's Section for Non-smoking and Health in the early 90s, I am well aware of the grim statistics related to smoking and second-hand smoke - and learned more about the addictive nature of nicotine that drives people to rely on it despite its effect on their health, and the health of those around them.

Prior to our vote to go smoke-free, Kara and Rachel's terrific presentation to a meeting of 9th Street Lofts owners provided compelling information about the danger of tobacco smoke, but also engineering research about how smoke can travel from one person's apartment to other units. While most owners were onboard right away, one gentleman argued that his home was his castle; I explained that the trope doesn't apply if his castle shares walls with other castles; smoke and its cancer-causing chemicals will find a way into adjacent castles.

Our smoke-free rule states that all smokable or vaped substances are banned everywhere in our building and garage, and on our property within 25' of the building. Two sides of our building abut city sidewalks, so a person could legally smoke directly below my first floor window - but it has never happened. Our experience has been that for as hard as some people fought before the vote, the furor died down immediately afterward, and the smokers stay well away from windows.

St Paul's adoption of a smoking policy disclosure ordinance would encourage other HOAs to go smoke-free — if not for the sake of health, but possibly so they are not among the last residential buildings where people can smoke. Once the the pool of buildings that allow smoking grows smaller, smokers will become more concentrated, thus making it far more dangerous for new owners who are not aware that they may be surrounded by smokers. The most important reason for the ordinance is that people looking to buy or rent a home deserve to know if they - and their children - will be exposed to second-hand smoke.

Both my parents smoked a pack a day, and now my sister and I - who chose to be non-smokers - live with chronic lung issues.

Thank you for considering my testimony.
Margaret Meyer
225 9th St E - Unit 106
St. Paul, MN 55101
mettameyer@gmail.com