

November 1, 2020

Heritage Preservation Commission
City Hall Annex
Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development
25 West 4th Street, Suite 1300
Saint Paul, MN 55102
attn: George Gause

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to voice my support for the Notice and Statement of Appeal for HPC Approval of New Construction File: 540 Portland Avenue, Carlos R. Perez (“Applicant”). I support the appeal, filed by Gar Hargens and Mary (Missy) Staples Thompson, and would like to reiterate their appeal to reverse the HPC approval of Applicant’s Project on substantive and procedural grounds. Substantively, the Project does not satisfy the design review guidelines set forth under Code Section 74.65, and under Code Section 73.06, the Project adversely affects the Historic Hill District. Procedurally, the HPC failed to provide members of the public the opportunity to hear all discussion and votes of the BZA or participate in testimony at the HPC hearing. I would also like to state that the Applicant (who is the current landlord for existing rental building) has not proven to be a good neighbor/doesn’t consistently maintain the existing property.

On the point of HPC hearing process and the particular applicant, I would like to speak personally. I have tried to follow this process since the neighbors were notified around September 11 regarding the new “Project” being proposed at 540/542 Portland, yet it was a surprise to know how long the HPC took to inform our community. I live at 544 Portland and have a vested interest in my community and the structures that surround my property. Though I tried fervently to attend the meetings held by both the BZA and the HPC, it was impossible to attend both as they were scheduled at the same time on the same day. After much trial and failure, I was allowed in (virtually) to the HPC meeting, but was unable to clearly hear some of the conversation and statements from members of the HPC and I was completely unable to make comments and voice concerns when the floor was opened to comments from the public and community. I tried fervently to unmute myself and to make my voice heard, but was never acknowledged and the meeting went on as if I was not there. It is upsetting first to have found out so late about a project that is proposed directly next to my home, especially when I now know that the HPC could have informed neighbors as early as February. It is also extremely disappointing to try to be an active participant of my neighborhood and community and attend hearings that matter to all of us, only to be ignored and unheard. The HPC’s process of approval seems to have left out those neighbors who will be most affected by this possible new build, they have

not taken in to consideration the many letters of opposition sent prior to the hearing, and therefore did not give the City Council a balanced view of how the neighborhood truly feels about this "Project".

To the point about the applicant. The property is not one that neighbors see as well taken care of. We have constant issues in winter with snow removal and the sidewalk in front of their property always has runoff because of their raised lot. The applicant has a retaining wall that infringes and has caused damage to the neighboring lot and there has never been any acknowledgement of this issue even as it deteriorates from one year the next.

This is not a neighbor who, like most others on the block, has invested time and energy into the maintenance and good standing of their property, but rather is negligent at best. This new project, it is clear to me and other neighbors, will only put a larger burden on the surrounding community of Portland Avenue.

Please hear this letter as a voice of support for the appeal letter filed by Gar Hargens and Mary (Missy) Staples Thompson and consider the voices you have so far forgotten in your hearing of this "Project."

Thank you,

Emilia Mettenbrink and Simon Jette Nantel
544 Portland Ave #3
St Paul MN 55102