

From: Vicki Baucom <vickibaucom@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2020 1:31 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward7 <Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Boys Totem Town Temporary Use

I support using Boys Totem Town for temporary and maybe permanent housing for FAMILIES. Family housing is extremely difficult and the property is perfect for housing families.

It provides a central pick-up location for SPPS which would save funds for transportation to school (when it resumes). It has, what is effectively, a commercial kitchen so families could prepare meals together. There is land for gardening so they can grow food to save money.

This is a safer use for the community as well. Families are more stable (with housing) than other parts of the homeless population. Providing family housing Totem Town would be the best action we could take to stabilize the families so they can get back on their feet. They would have the additional support of each other to build a support network.

Please consider using this valuable asset to protect families.

Sincerely,

~Vicki Baucom
Ward 7 resident

From: Jennifer Birkholz <birky3000@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2020 2:50 PM
To: Heintz, Polly (CI-StPaul) <polly.heintz@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Prince, Jane (CI-StPaul) <Jane.Prince@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Neighbor comments on Totem Town use for homeless shelter

Dear St.Paul City Council,

I understand through a neighborhood email that the City Council will address the topic of using Totem Town for not only emergency COVID quarantine needs, but for a general need of housing homeless teen and families. I have a list of questions and concerns below. My thoughts are from the perspective of a neighbor of Totem Town and one who has experience working in a homeless shelter with families and individuals. I recognize we are in challenging times, but it is important to recognize the complexity of the solutions that you are considering. When looking for solutions, please consider the following points regarding the Totem Town property.

1. I'm concerned about the spirit and mental health of teens and families that are being sent to live in an old detention facility – they will know what is was.
2. How will they be safe from contracting and spreading COVID in a dormitory setting?
3. Totem Town is on the edge of the city away from the areas and resources that most are familiar with and not that easy to travel to and from.

4. It is not safe to walk to Totem Town from the nearest bus stop. There is no sidewalk and a curved road that is difficult to navigate when walking with traffic.
5. The entry into the neighborhood, intersection of Burlington and Lower Afton, can be difficult to navigate. It will need a stoplight before that land has higher occupancy and traffic.
6. There are no sidewalks in the neighborhood so as they are bored and walking around there will be more dangerous foot traffic.
7. Will it be well staffed with mental health, nursing, childcare, education and job development professionals? That is the only way to be effective at helping homeless move to independence.
8. Will there be enough constant security on grounds? Once you open it up, seems very likely to become an encampment for the broader homeless community once the word spreads.
9. Will the Totem Town neighborhood have more police patrol in general, we rarely see them now.
10. The mental health issues of the homeless are real and often incorporate paranoid issues. Being sent out to the edge of town may only exacerbate their feelings.
11. The neighborhood has done a good job at absorbing and welcoming the immigrant community (near McKnight&Lower Afton) that is next to the Totem Town property. Is there consideration about how all of our communities would get along?
12. There seems to be drug dealing going on at the Holiday Station at McKnight & Lower Afton, how do you protect this vulnerable population and neighborhood from increased traffic and Holiday becoming more of a "hangout". Will St.Paul police post regular security at Holiday?
13. I did not know that there are 2000 homeless teens as was mentioned in the neighborhood email. Is there an advertising campaign to encourage families to foster teens?
14. If this is truly just a temporary plan/need, are there universities in town without full capacity in their dorms over the summer where they can stay closer to the areas that they are familiar with. Seems like a more positive setting rather than sending people out to the edge of town.
15. Can the city buy smaller 4-6 plex properties where a small number of teens can stay and one unit be used for a social worker/apartment manager? The idea is to provide a more family environment while helping them develop independent adult skills quickly and in a more healthy way. It is unfortunate they have to grow up so quickly, but

appropriate programming could increase their success. Having their own space and teaching life skills seems safer and more effective for the long term.

I believe Totem Town has great potential for an urban camp or transition home, but only if well-funded with a variety of resources to help people with mental health issues. And then education and job training resources to help them get jobs with a living wage. I'm very concerned that without a comprehensive program that is staffed in a well-rounded way and funded appropriately, the neighborhood is going to suffer and for those housed at Totem Town it will only be a very temporary band-aid to their problems and riddled with challenges since the property is not located near the resources they need.

Thank you for addressing the above issues when considering Totem Town in your solutions.

Kind Regards,

Jen Birkholz

Neighbor of Totem Town