

March 6, 2013

David Thune
Ward 2 - City Council
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102

Re: Item #22, AHPC 13-2

Dear David,

I read about the recent proposal to expand the sidewalks along 6th Street across from Mears Park. As a resident of downtown St. Paul, I would like to share my support of the proposal. I love living downtown, and I take pride in showing out-of-towners all of the things it has to offer. As young professionals, my friends and colleagues like to support local establishments, and we frequently visit the Mears Park area. I would like to see our local businessowners be supported in their efforts to expand and grow their businesses. Expanding seating to the outdoors will benefit patrons, and bring additional folks to the Lowertown area. What Minnesotan doesn't enjoy an outdoor patio on a warm day?

I am a new resident of St. Paul after living 8 years in Minneapolis. Upon moving here, I was pleasantly surprised and impressed with the lack of traffic in downtown St. Paul and the ease of parking. I never have difficulty finding appropriate parking when I visit the Farmer's Market, my pharmacy, and my favorite bars/restaurants. I do not think this sidewalk expansion will greatly impact downtown residents' ability to get around. I often find myself walking or using the skyway system when possible.

I am unable to attend this evening's meeting due to my work commitments. Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Sincerely,

Ms. Caryn Jacowski
City Walk Condominium Resident
St. Paul, MN 55101

I am opposed to this for little gain for a few businesses. Payback over 20 years is unacceptable - the taxpayers are not a bank. Other similar establishments get by with normal sidewalks as does all of the bars/restaurants on West 7th and Grand Avenue. Let's put our time, energy and money into luring more retail downtown. Giving up parking space is ridiculous - no parking is what drives folks away from downtown. These are spaces that guests of downtown residents need.

Also, any safety concern for the elderly and disabled needs to be at the top of the list for not doing this.

Thank you - a St Paul taxpayer.

Mary J. Gaertner, FLMI

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Council President Lantry and Council Members,

My name is Jim Ivey. I live at 300 Wall Street in Lowertown, and also own a business in the 180 East Fifth building in Lowertown.

I'm here today to speak in opposition to the appeal by the Public Works Department.

At the January 24th Heritage Preservation Commission meeting, HPC staff presented an alternative proposal for a 14-foot sidewalk extension that would achieve the same goals as the original sidewalk extension proposal, but additionally preserve the character of the Lowertown Historic District. Unfortunately their proposal was rejected and they were told that the Mayor would not support the staff recommendation.

I'm here in support of that HPC recommended alternative, because it not only preserves the character of the Lowertown Historic District, but also aligns with an important, existing downtown Capitol Improvement plan for the rest of 6th Street.

6th + 5th Streets Improvement Project in 2009, was a Capital Improvement initiative to beautify the streetscape on 6th and 5th Streets in downtown Saint Paul.

It was executed by an advisory group comprised of PED, Parks and Rec, Public Works, DSI, Metro Transit, BOMA and the CapitolRiver Council

That combined group knows the area well and helped identify numerous issues that need to be addressed. They provided background information and details of their specific individual property investment plans, and critiqued many different proposed strategies.

PED also established a Technical Resource Group, composed of staff from City departments that would carry out major portions of the proposed work. This technical group serves as a valuable resource to ensure that plans can be implemented, and PED was to continue to work with this group after these proposals were issued.

The 6th + 5th Streets Improvement Project made many recommendations that I don't have time to speak about today, but I do want to call out that one important component of the vision for this project was to **“Balance Movement by designing 6th and 5th as “complete streets” that accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, transit and auto traffic.”**

To accomplish this, the project specifically called for:

1. A **14-foot public sidewalk dimension**, and
2. A **widening of the existing bus “diamond lanes” on 6th and 5th by four feet to add independent dedicated bike lanes that would be painted blue and positioned to the left of the bus lanes**, following a model used in other cities like Copenhagen.

The alternative proposal recommended in January by the HPC very thoughtfully aligns with our downtown plan and makes these goals possible, whereas the original proposal from the Mayor's office goes in the opposite direction, relegating downtown cyclists and Nice Ride users to a dangerous competition with the hundreds of daily buses that use 6th Street.

The 6th + 5th Streets Improvement Project is a critical component of the revitalization of the central part of downtown, also known as the “donut hole” or “dead zone”. It was the result of a series of planning meetings that involved all stakeholders, and presents a great set of recommendations for how the city should stitch together the active street life that we have around Rice Park and Mears Park, and introduce their visitors to the rest of downtown. This plan from the mayor's office was generated without the guidance of those stakeholders, and sets a poor precedent for how downtown planning should happen. It makes selfish, permanent changes to the street grid that don't align with the thoughtfulness or the character of the 6th Street plan to the west, or the rest of the Lowertown Historic District to the south.

I strongly ask that you support the Heritage Preservation Commission, deny this appeal, and allow any parties interested in making streetscape improvements to work through PED's 6th + 5th Streets Technical Resource Group to recommend changes that are part of our larger downtown vision.

Dear Council Members

There is substantial opposition to the proposed expansion of the 6th Street sidewalk by the people who live in Lowertown and some businesses too.

Please do not override the recommendations of other committees that have recommended the project not be approved.

Bob Grenier, PhD, MBA, CCP, DTM
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