

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and our three children have lived on Desnoyer Avenue for the last ten years. Our house is across the street from several Olson-owned rental properties, including four units that have been tenant occupied during that time. We have enjoyed getting to know the people living in those units, and appreciate the the opportunity for affordable rental housing is available in our neighborhood. We also live very near the two-story duplex that is now being renovated and will soon be rented again. From our perspective this is the absolute best outcome — the continued availability of affordable housing in the neighborhood under new management.

I understand that some in the neighborhood have reached the point of no longer being able to tolerate the vacant, un- and under-maintained properties. I appreciate their perspective, many have been around longer than us and have tried different strategies for bringing about the reasonable change sought. It is a frustrating situation that has become personal. That said I strongly caution leaders and neighbors against pushing too hard too fast and bringing about unintended consequences, such as evictions, loss of affordable housing, or a large scale redevelopment that results in loss of green space.

In closing, it is my sincere hope that the leaders at the city or in the neighborhood will find a way to bring the Desnoyer Park community (renters and homeowners) together to figure out a way forward that maximizes outcomes for the neighborhood while minimizing collateral damage.

Sincerely,

Ericca Richter-Maas
530 Desnoyer

To Whom It May Concern:

I feel lucky to live in Desnoyer Park, an urban neighborhood with access to the river and natural open spaces with a diverse socio-economic community. Desnoyer Park has large riverfront homes and smaller rental properties sharing the neighborhood. The community feel is strong; neighbors come together to create and maintain an ice skating rink, organize spring clean-up days, potlucks, picnics and block parties.

Lately the community and the neighborhood feel under attack. There is a small group of neighbors who call themselves, "The Concerned Citizens of Desnoyer Park." They have a malicious intent to rid the neighborhood of Jay Olson and the Olson families' properties. They claim their goal is to create a safer space for renters and to hold Jay Olson accountable for maintaining his properties; however, they do not seem to be interested in renovating and improving these properties.

Recently Jeff Chermak renovated the property at 521 Desnoyer. This small group of neighbors fought to have the building torn down; they did not want Mr. Chermak to renovate the existing property. The duplex is a solid stucco home, it would have been a tragedy to tear it down. Jeff Chermak was able to renovate the duplex and bring it up to code in a timely manner. Countless neighbors have commented on the improvement to the neighborhood. Unfortunately, during the renovation process the aforementioned neighborhood group continued to conspire against progress, they wrote a letter with false statements regarding the work completed on the property and distributed it to homes in the neighborhood.

The city should be aware regarding all the Olson properties that there are multiple view points within the neighborhood. Jeff Chermak has proven that he can offer a solution to the problem of the vacant properties. He is able to renovate and bring them up to code creating safe rental properties. Instead of fighting to have homes torn down and tenants evicted, I would prefer other ways to be involved as a concerned citizen of Desnoyer Park: please join the group that offers to shovel and flood the ice rink in the winter, participate in the park clean up in the spring, or just share a dish at a block party or park potluck.

Thank you,


Kristina Reynertson
463 Desnoyer Avenue

Mr. Magner and Ms. Henningson
Manager of Code Enforcement
City of Saint Paul
375 Jackson Street, Suite 220
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1806

Samantha Henningson
Ward 4 Councilmember
310-D City Hall
15 West Kellogg Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mr. Magner and Ms. Henningson:

Our family has lived and been home owners in the Desnoyer Park neighborhood since 2004. We recently became aware of a growing movement of people in our neighborhood "*The Concerned Citizens of Desnoyer Park*", with complaints regarding rental properties owned by Jay Olson of Forest Lake, MN and one that is currently under renovation by Jeff Chermak. We are writing in opposition to this group and our concerns focus instead on the potential treat to valued neighbors. We would like to provide you with our perspective and three areas of concern.

Our primary concern is for the tenants of two of Mr. Olson's properties who have been given eviction notices because the properties in which they reside are listed as vacant and do not have a current certificate of occupancy. We personally know the couple that lives in 503 Desnoyer Avenue, and they have been kind, considerate, and respectful neighbors. They live in front of my children's bus stop and have been friendly faces each morning. We are requesting that the families be allowed to remain in their homes. If this has not already occurred, please allow for inspections to be done, and for Mr. Olson to address the concerns with these properties; we implore you to do whatever needs to be done to reverse the eviction notices. Evictions are an ugly way to rip apart communities and we believe some compassion is necessary to correct a mistake.

Our second concern is for the tenants residing in Mr. Olson's remaining properties. Please allow the remaining tenants to reside in their homes. Unlike the "concerned citizens" group, we do not see Mr. Olson's properties as a "scourge." On the contrary, we have appreciated that rental properties have been available to those who choose not to or are unable to purchase a home in Desnoyer Park. We believe the "concerned citizens" group's concerns for Mr. Olson's properties going into disrepair is grossly overstated and by most measures believe these homes to be average residents within the neighborhood. If improvements are needed, there should be a solution that allows for the remaining tenants to stay in their homes, and which allows Mr. Olson to either sell or bring the properties up to code. We are friends with several people in Mr. Olson's properties near the

Mr. Magner and Ms. Henningson

Date

Page 2

Desnoyer Ave – Eustis Ave intersection, and they also have been a tremendous asset to our neighborhood. They are active participants in our neighborhood functions: going on group walks in the morning, singing and dancing at the neighborhood night out, and standing with my children while they wait for the bus on cold winter mornings.

Our third concern is for the complaints regarding 515/517 Desnoyer Avenue. We are in full support of renovations that are taking place to bring the property up to code and allow more renters to reside in our neighborhood. This renovation was recently vandalized and tagged with the word "slum." For years this home sat vacant, and only when Mr. Chermak began to renovate the home was there concern and now slanderous vandalism. This is beyond illogical and we truly do not understand the counter-productive attitude toward this property.

The "*Concerned citizens of Desnoyer Park*" does not speak for all residents of Desnoyer Park, and we respectfully disagree with the manner in which they have increased their frequency of complaints to trigger action. It is disheartening and we believe it is time for compassion to lead future decision making.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Larson and Chrystian Pereira
474 Desnoyer Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55104

To the St. Paul City Council in the matter of Olson Properties,

I am a 20-year renter from Arne and Shirley Olson, and most recently Jay Olson/Olson Trust. I have known many of the the renters; many have been personal friends for years.

Since the passing of the senior Olsons, Arne in 2009 and Shirley last year, Jay has been trying to look after the properties even as he was honored for 40 years with the Saint Anthony Fire Department.

The cosmetics of some of the properties may be deceiving. At least 4 of the 6 duplex units on Desnoyer Avenue have been remodeled, new appliances installed, floors redone. I have been in these units and most have been inspected, according to the tenants.

My experience has been that the Olsons do respond when I have a problem at my address. All of the tenants I have known had good relationships with the Olsons and had issues with their rentals resolved in a timely fashion. He is not ignoring his tenants.

I recently learned that the city is evicting my friends Josh and Cierra because no certificate of occupancy is on file. I sincerely wish the city would be lenient with this. Josh is capable of doing work for Jay and they might work out a favorable agreement.

I would be willing to bet that all these issues would be resolved in time by Jay Olson to everyone's satisfaction. I have noticed a few unpleasant neighbors who like to make a lot of noise about the Olson properties. Rest assured, there are just as many who support these rental properties and are happy to have low income people who are musicians and artists as neighbors. Desnoyer Park has always varied from block to block; we appreciate diversity.

Please do not make hasty decisions regarding our welfare here, as if no one is listening.