



SIERRA CLUB

NORTH STAR CHAPTER

Sierra Club North Star Chapter
2300 Myrtle Avenue, Suite 260
Saint Paul, MN 55114

Tuesday July 21, 2020, 10:30 a.m.

The Saint Paul City Council
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul MN 55102
CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us

RE: Zoning variance appeals, 2170 Ford Parkway — July 22 agenda. File 20-038544.

Dear Saint Paul City Council Members:

We submit these comments on behalf of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter. Founded in 1968, the Sierra Club North Star Chapter is a nonprofit environmental organization representing over 20,000 members and 80,000 supporters across Minnesota. The Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife and preserve our remaining wild places. We participate in the administrative process to encourage environmental health and sustainability, long-term wildlife and habitat protection and biodiversity goals. Essential to this work is advocating and educating for vibrant urban communities with a commitment to equity for all.

We urge you to reverse the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeal's (BZA's) denial of Ryan Companies' lot coverage variance request — in other words, to allow a 90.3% lot coverage at 2170 Ford Parkway. We believe this is important to make this first mixed-use project at Highland Bridge a success by attracting the planned grocery tenant on the ground floor. We also believe that density, if properly designed, increases the efficiencies and productivity of urban infrastructure such as sewers, roads, transit and open space — all of which, in this location, is already substantial. In other words, greater density in urban areas increases the return on investment from major public capital investments and improvements. Ryan points to its previous similar project, The Vintage at Selby and Snelling, as model and precedent for 2170 Ford Parkway. The difference is that The Vintage has no adjacent open space, whereas 2170 will overlook the preeminent open space axis of the entire Ford Site. Please vote yes on this appeal by Ryan Companies.

By contrast to the above, we urge you to sustain BZA's denial of Ryan's car sharing variance request — in other words, to require eight car sharing spaces be within the project rather than at a hub somewhere else to be determined. Physical separation of car share parking from its nearest, most logical target market, even by a short distance, discourages otherwise prime potential members from actually trading personal vehicles for shared transportation. All the environmental benefits of car sharing — and there are many — may be moot if it is not designed and located so as to produce results. Particularly in winter, project residents and customers would be best served by car share spaces within a multiunit complex, sheltered in that part of its structured parking that is open to the public. At 436 spaces in the project, there is more than enough parking to allow for eight car share spaces and vehicles. Please vote no on this appeal by Ryan Companies.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Mathews Hollinshead
Conservation Chair
North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club