

From: [Andrew Cleary](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul>Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Comment on File 21-310-795, 1708 Selby Rezoning
Date: Thursday, December 2, 2021 3:09:52 PM

I am writing to oppose the rezoning of the lot at 1708 Selby from B2 to RM2. There are a number of concerns with the rezoning proposal itself, as well as with the building plan described by the property owner, which calls for a pedestrian-unfriendly first floor of parking and a unit-per-acre density higher than any of the city's own targets. Since the rezoning request is currently under review, I will try to stay close to points regarding zoning, but I hope that the City Council will help give some closer attention to the building plan itself, to ensure that it fits with the city's Comprehensive Plan and Union Park's Community Plan.

1. The rezoning claims to meet the Comprehensive Plan of St Paul and the Union Park Community Plan by promoting mixed-use, but it does not; rezoning would reduce mixed use on the corridor.

The findings of fact from the Zoning Committee and Planning Commission point out that Selby Avenue from Snelling to Fairview is considered a Mixed-Use area, and that Policy LU-1 of the Comprehensive Plan encourages transit-supportive density in this area; it also points out that Policy LU1.1 of the Union Park Community Plan encourages compact development in commercial areas and mixed-use corridors, and that Policy H1.1 of that plan calls for support of multi-unit mixed-use development in mixed-use corridors, while minimizing impacts on adjacent lower density areas and discouraging multi-unit housing and retail uses that are incompatible with single-family residential areas.

However, as is clear from the rezoning application, this building plan does not create a mixed-use building, and in fact the rezoning would reduce the mixed-use quality of the block it stands on by removing the business zoning at 1708 Selby, where there is currently an active business.

2. Rezoning would fail to support small, varied business in a location that specifically calls for it.

Policy LU-6 of the Comprehensive Plan ("Foster equitable and sustainable economic growth") includes a number of points that call for "facilitating business creation, attraction, retention and expansion", "supporting family-sustaining jobs and enhancing workers' skills to excel at those jobs", "supporting businesses, real estate and financial models that keep more money locally, such as locally-owned businesses", and "building and expanding neighborhood economic and cultural assets through the development of the local micro-economies of our Neighborhood Nodes."

In the Union Park Community Plan, Policy LU1.2 calls for encouraging "a balance of retail and service-oriented establishments, providing a variety of goods and resources within a close proximity to Union Park residents"; LU3.4 calls for promoting "diversity of goods and services accessible within Union Park"; LU3.1 calls for promoting "the recruitment and retention of a diverse array of small, locally owned businesses that provide a variety of goods and services"; and LU3.3 calls for supporting "the establishment of a unique identity for the Snelling and Selby shopping areas to elevate it as a local destination and to help existing and new small, locally-owned businesses thrive".

The current business at 1708 Selby is a one-story building that houses a small, locally owned remodeling contractor. The business is highly rated in online reviews, and considering that the surrounding neighborhood has many homes and buildings built decades or even a hundred years ago, it is uniquely valuable to have a business nearby that specializes in remodeling.

What's more, many of the other businesses in the area are in retail, dining, or are rented office space for services. It is rare to have a business in the building trades, something that is all the more valuable for the opportunity it provides for workers to develop valuable skills in a high-demand industry.

3. Rezoning would hamper the neighborhood's ability to be resilient and adapt to future needs.

While the existing business is a valuable asset to the community, it is worth considering what can happen if the business vacates the property. The one-story building could be rented to another business in the trades, or repurposed to support a new small business. On the other hand, if the lot is rezoned to RM2, it will be harder to redevelop the lot for any future mixed-use needs.

The property owner has indicated in his public comments that if the lot at 1708 is not rezoned, he would demolish the building to put a parking lot there in support of multi-unit housing that he plans to build on the adjacent lots. I want to set aside for a moment whether a surface parking lot would be the best use of a lot in the middle of a dense, mixed-use corridor, and just point out even if a parking lot were built there, keeping the underlying business zoning would still preserve resilience and adaptability, so that the commercial lot could be repurposed in the future.

4. Denying rezoning still allows for higher-density housing to be built in the mixed-use corridor, consistent with the city and community's vision for the corridor.

The property owner has said that if the lot at 1708 Selby is not rezoned, he still plans to develop multi-unit housing on the adjacent lots that he owns. Therefore, it seems that denial

of the rezoning will still allow the city and neighborhood to retain Selby's important mixed-use character, and support future resilience and needs, while still allowing the property owner to add density on the nearby lots.

As a final note, I understand that the Planning Commission is currently reviewing possibilities and guidance for "infill" development at many places throughout the city. The lots in question for this rezoning seem like ideal candidates for "missing middle"-type development, considering that a neighborhood node is nearby and that the surrounding blocks have one, two, and three-story detached homes, multi-unit fourplexes and apartment buildings, and varied businesses. It is my hope that the city will help the property owner work with the community to support the vibrant, mixed-use and mixed-density character of the neighborhood, rather than impose a construction so far out of line with the Comprehensive and Community Plans.

Thank you for your time and attention,
Andrew Cleary
1717 Hague Avenue
Ward 4 Resident