

## Public comment for Item 42 – Ord 21-52 – re: Selby Flats

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### **Please make Selby Flats flatter!**

**Councilmember:** If you vote “yes” for the rezoning of 1708 Selby (one of three lots for the Selby Flats proposal), please do so with qualification. Limit Selby Flats to three stories.

I live at 1716 Hague Avenue, one street over from Selby Flats. From my front door, the new building would block the sky.

I am not against the rezoning, nor am I against a multifamily structure. I am against its height. It is too big for our neighborhood (or for any similar neighborhood in St. Paul). A four or five story building would loom over our block and destroy its character and our quality of life.

The heart of St. Paul is its strong neighborhoods. Please do not destroy our neighborhood in the name of progress. All I ask for is a compromise. A three-story building would be positive change. Let’s agree to that.

I share the goal of increased density and I’m glad to see the neighborhood develop. The additional people and traffic are signs of success in an urban community. That’s all good. My only objection is that I’m for evolutionary change rather than revolutionary change.

### **4 Reasons Selby Flats should be limited to 3 stories:**

#### **1. It is an anomaly.**

The tallest buildings in our area are two stories. Even a three-story building would break the standard. To find anything at five stories you’d have to go the new developments at Selby and Selling, or more than a mile to the west down Marshall Avenue toward the river. Why stick such a monstrosity in the middle of a predominantly residential neighborhood?

#### **2. No Buffer**

The height of the building would be all the more imposing because there is little space between the new building and the homes on our block. The block is narrow, the lots are small, and there is no alley. We would suddenly be thrust into a valley at the foot of a mountain.

#### **3. Sense of place**

Right now there is a huge antenna at 1708 Selby that rises 50-feet or so into the air. If you stand on our street and imagine a building that tall spread across three lots, it feels as if it’s Mt. Rainier.

There’s a phenomenon called a ‘sense of place.’ It’s not quantifiable, but it’s real. It’s about your emotional attachment to your community, the foundation of an engaged

citizenry. When something threatens to disrupt one's sense of place, you get a gut feeling of discomfort. It is like one's sense of personal space. If someone invades your personal space, you feel uncomfortable. Now imagine a big, tall, wide person invading your personal space by standing too close to you. They are staring at you. And they are always there. If you want them to go away, they could say, "What's the matter, don't you like people? Are you antisocial?" The discomfort is a visceral response. You won't feel better until they take a step back. The step back I am looking for in this case is a compromise, a three-story building instead of a five-story building. I hope this helps you see my point, if not feel my pain.

#### **4. Zoning Committee did not listen – that opposes the spirit of democracy**

I was one of five irate homeowners on Hague Avenue to speak out against Selby Flats at a recent Zoning Committee hearing. My neighbors realized that the edifice would loom over us, disrupting the mundane tranquility of our block – the place where most of us had raised our families and a couple of young families are just starting out. At first one commissioner sympathized with us, seeing how the new development would be such an anomaly. But an older and wiser commissioner chided him, saying this dilemma was a big controversy several years back that ended with a new Big Plan in 2018. "You don't want to start up that fire again," he said. To which the other commissioner replied. "I wasn't here in 2018 – but I sure don't want to start up that fire again." No one spoke in favor of the proposal other than the developer, but it passed unanimously. As a citizen thrust into the role of self-advocate, why should I go through the sham of a public hearing if this was already decided in 2018? The whole point of a hearing is to find out whether a vision established years ago needs to be adjusted due to a specific situation in the here and now. The point of a hearing is to listen!

As a City Council Member, you are our last hope of finding someone to listen. Please don't automatically follow decisions made years ago by people looking at zoning maps. Instead, come and visit our block so that you too can imagine how a 5-story Selby Flats would ruin the neighborhood and force us out.

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