From:	Kaleb McCulloch
To:	CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Cc:	John Perlich
Subject:	SPAC Letter Submission_Ryan Companies BZA Appeal_ABZA 25-1 and ABZA 25-2
Date:	Monday, February 10, 2025 3:53:36 PM
Attachments:	image001.png SPAC_2.12.25_Ryan Companies BZA Appeal_Public Comments.pdf

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Hello,

Attached is the St. Paul Area Chamber's letter for the public record regarding Ryan Companies' appeal of the BZA's decision to deny variance requests – listed as ABZA 25-1 and ABZA 25-2 on this week's City Council agenda. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Kaleb McCulloch

ST PAUL AREA CHAMBER

Kaleb McCulloch
Senior Director of Government Affairs
C | 320.515.1801
D | 651.265.2788
kaleb@stpaulchamber.com

ST PAUL
AREA CHAMBER

MAKING CONNECTIONS THAT COUNT

401 N Robert Street, Suite 150
St. Paul, MN 55101

February 12, 2025

Councilmember Anika Bowie
Councilmember Rebecca Noecker
Councilmember Saura Jost
Councilmember Hwa Jeong Kim
Councilmember Nelsie Yang
Councilmember Cheniqua Johnson

Re: BZA Action Appeal, Highland Bridge Block 2B and 2C

Dear members of the City Council,

On behalf of the St. Paul Area Chamber and our 1,700+ members and affiliates, I write to express our support for the proposed Highland Bridge Block 2B and 2C development at the intersection of Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue.

Approving these variances is essential to the project's feasibility. The 16-foot elevation change along Ford Parkway creates a major design challenge—if the retail buildings were to remain connected on a single elevation, the westernmost entrances would be 14-16 feet above the sidewalk. Segmenting the buildings enables a functional design that brings the storefronts to street level, creating a welcoming and accessible environment while improving ADA compliance. Additionally, constraints from the civic spaces and the pedestrian pathway easement reduce the amount of developable land, limiting the density that can be achieved.

The requested variances continue to align with the original vision. The proposed project with variances will still contribute to the vitality of Highland Bridge by introducing market-rate residential housing, a daycare center, retail spaces, and dining options. Key elements of the Ford Site Master Plan are preserved, such as the pedestrian pathway linking Civic Plaza and Civic Square. This approach has earned the support of the Highland District Council's community development committee and the Saint Paul PED staff report, reinforcing the desire to move forward with this project.

We respectfully ask that you overturn the Board of Zoning Appeal's ruling and approve the variances for Highland Bridge Block 2B and 2C. Delaying and potentially losing this project will stall Saint Paul's progress in addressing both the housing shortage and needed economic development.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brenda L. Kyle

B Kyle
President and CEO
St. Paul Area Chamber

From: Ellen Miller
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Highland Bridge Project
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 2:46:03 PM

[You don't often get email from miller.ellenann@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification]

This email is in regards to the downzoning of the Ford Parkway development blocks at the Highland Bridge. I would advocate exempting the project from the city's rent stabilization program, rather than see the four story mixed use plans reduced to one story commercial space.

Regards
Ellen Miller
2110 Pinehurst
St. Paul, 55116

Sent from my iPad

From: Ed Stuart
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Deny Ford Site Variance
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 12:59:51 PM

You don't often get email from edward.l.stuart@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Dear Councilmembers,

I am a Ward 4 resident and I urge the council to vote against Ryan Companies appeal, and uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan Company's 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway. This site was planned to support our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance. This variance would fly in the face of these goals.

Saint Paul doesn't need another low-tax capacity, car dependent strip mall. We need what the Ford Master Plan and zoning of this site calls for: mixed use, transit oriented, high density development that will meaningfully contribute to our City's tax capacity for the long term.

Ryan Companies has no grounds for a variance. The company admits to economic issues, but that is insufficient per Minnesota law.

Please stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility and the thousands of hours of staff and resident time that went into creating the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Sincerely,
Ed Stuart
1900 Goodrich Ave

PS: Ryan's ask for a*TIF public subsidy for this project is a slap in the face.*

From: Karlas MBP
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Opposition to Ryan Company Appeal
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 12:32:36 PM

[You don't often get email from karlabeth@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification]

Council Members,

Sometimes vacant is better, certainly better than the uninspired proposal submitted by Ryan companies for the Highland Bridge block at Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue.

I have no doubt that the challenges encountered are real, but the plan proposed by Ryan would have been at best meh thirty to forty years ago.

Is this bland offering more of a bargaining position than anything else? It is not worthy of Highland Bridge. How about green roofs, more visual interest in materials, etc. for starters.

Uphold the denial by the BZA majority and ask Ryan to try again.

Karla Hollinshead
Highland Resident for 23 years

From:	Mathews Hollinshead
To:	Tom Basgen; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council; CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Subject:	Highland Bridge
Date:	Monday, February 10, 2025 12:27:18 PM

[You don't often get email from mathews.hollinshead@me.com. Learn why this is important at https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification]

I write in strong opposition to Ryan's requested variances to the Highland Bridge masterplan on the block fronting the west side of Cretin. I urge you to deny those requests by sustaining the BZA's decision at this Wednesday's City Council meeting.

Countless thousands of hours went into the planning process for Highland Bridge. We all know that St. Paul and Minnesota have an ongoing housing crisis. Climate change dangers require zoning density, not stripmalls. Metro Transit's A Line makes this site ideal for transit-oriented development, the opposite of what Ryan proposes.

Please vote "no" to Ryan's proposed variances.

Mathews Hollinshead
2114 Pinehurst Ave.
St. Paul MN 55116
651-492-0645

Sent from my iPhone

From: DOUGLAS SMITH
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Ryan Variance Request
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 9:56:18 AM
Attachments: Ryan Companies request for Zoning Variance 2-9-25.docx

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You don't often get email from smithyhse@msn.com. Learn why this is important

Copied below and attached is my letter opposing the Ryan Companies Variance Request.

_____

OPPOSITION TO RYAN COMPANIES REQUEST FOR VARIANCES TO HIGHLAND BRIDGE MASTER PLAN

I am writing this in opposition to granting Ryan Companies zoning variances to height and density for 2200 Ford Parkway, that are not consistent with the Highland Bridge Master Plan. I oppose it on the grounds that it would reduce potential housing stock with access to the very desirable amenities provided at Highland Bridge. St. Paul needs to increase its desirable housing stock to sustain its population and grow its tax base. According to Presbyterian Homes, their senior complex Marvella, filled faster than any of their other developments to date. That proves the desirability and attraction that Highland Bridge has for living. If development economics requires that the site be exempted from rent control, I think that can be justified by the additional housing units and increased tax base that the development would provide under existing zoning standards.

Doug Smith

Marvella resident

825 Mount Curve Blvd

St. Paul, MN 55116

From: Brad Lis
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Cc: David Eide
Subject: Support Letter - BZA Action Appeal, 2200 Ford Parkway (24-095781) and 0 Cretin Avenue (24-096392)
Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 8:52:04 AM
Attachments: Highland Bridge support letter 2.10.2025.docx

You don't often get email from brad.lis@lfhi.com. Learn why this is important

Please find attached our thoughts regarding the above reference matter. Thank you, Brad.

Brad Lis
Real Estate
Lund Real Estate Holdings, LLC(Lunds & Byerlys)
612-802-4320

February 10, 2025

St. Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55102

Email: Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us
CC: David.Eide@ci.stpaul.mn.us

RE: BZA Action Appeal, 2200 Ford Parkway (24-095781) and 0 Cretin Avenue (24-096392)

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Highland Bridge Block 2B and 2C development, located at the intersection of Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue. This project will bring significant benefits to both our neighborhood and the broader Highland Park area.

The proposed development remains aligned with the original intent proposed for the Highland Bridge development. Due to the many major events since the project began, including the Covid 19 pandemic, civil unrest, interest rate increases, and change in city policies regarding housing development, new real estate projects have slowed significantly and the vibrancy of the area has suffered because of this slow down. It is important for support of already built portions of the Highland Bridge project, and St Paul overall, that progress continues to build the critical mass necessary to make it truly successful. Development of the proposed plan will provide much-needed housing, retail, and amenities to Highland Park and the City. The requested variances are reasonable, well-considered and necessary for the applicant given the various constraints of the physical site and broader external factors that have occurred since the adoption of the Ford Site Master Plan and Zoning Code.

I care deeply about the future of our neighborhood, and I am confident that this development will be a positive addition. I respectfully urge the City Council to overturn the BZA's ruling, approve the variances and fully support the project's implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brad Lis
Lund Real Estate Holdings(Lunds & Byerlys)
4100 W. 50th St.
Edina, MN 55424

From: Merritt Clapp-Smith
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Public comment for 02-12-25 Council agenda item #23 re 2200 Ford Pkwy
Date: Sunday, February 9, 2025 7:36:17 PM
Attachments: Clapp-Smith Public Comment RE ABZA 25-1 item 23 on 02-12-25 City Council agenda.pdf

You don't often get email from merritt.clappsmith@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Please find below and attached public comment on Feb.12, 2025 City Council agenda item 23.

February 9, 2025

Members of the Saint Paul City Council,

As a city resident, a taxpayer, and the Saint Paul planning staff lead for Ford site redevelopment planning for 11 years, I implore the city to uphold the decision of the Board of Zoning Appeals and deny Ryan Companies' requested variances to height and floor area ratio at 2200 Ford Parkway.

Proposed variances for height and floor area ratio are inconsistent with the Highland Bridge Master Plan

The master plan is specific about the expected height and density of development for the site. The requested variance reductions to height and floor area ratio are significant enough to require an amendment to the Highland Bridge Master Plan.

The Master Plan was carefully crafted and approved through a decade of planning work, hundreds of public meetings, a dozen studies, and input from public, private and nonprofit partners. A change of this magnitude must be reviewed and enabled through a Master Plan amendment that gets full public discussion and review through Planning Commission and City Council processes.

Proposed variances are inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Variances may only be legally approved if they are consistent with the spirit and intent of the city's adopted Comprehensive Plan. The proposed variances would result in development that is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as identified in the following policies:

- *"Policy LU-1. Encourage transit-supportive density and direct the majority of growth to areas with the highest existing or planned transit capacity."*
- *"Policy LU-2. Pursue redevelopment of Opportunity Sites (generally sites larger than one acre identified as having potential for redevelopment) as higher-density mixed-use development."*
- *"Policy LU-8. Ensure that zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development.*
- *"Neighborhood Nodes [*which the site is designated*] are denser concentrations of development relative to the adjacent future land use categories."*

Proposed variances to height and floor area ratio do not meet legal standards

The proposed variances are based on economic conditions, and not on practical difficulties unique to the site.

Minnesota Statute 2010, section 394.27, subd. 7 states, *"Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties."* Although the applicant states that site conditions such as slope and perched groundwater are practical difficulties, these conditions are prevalent throughout the Highland Area and are not true impediments to development. They are easily addressed through design and engineering, as demonstrated by the presence of other developments nearby and elsewhere in the city where similar conditions exist.

The crux of the variance requests to reduce the height and floor area ratio rest of the argument that the market cannot support the scale of development required by zoning and the Master Plan. This does not meet the legal standard to grant a variance, which has been reaffirmed by the courts through previous legal cases in Minnesota.

Proposed development undermines the city's long-term tax base, economic and environmental sustainability, and the trust of the public and city partners

The city should maximize tax value potential on opportunity sites created through significant public investments, planning and public input, and optimum conditions. Highland Bridge is a fantastic site in an economically vibrant area, next to the Mississippi River, and features great parks and open space amenities created in large part through a Tax Increment Financing district. The city approved the district as a judicious investment to leverage high density development that would create economic value for a century or more.

Taxpayers and partners such as the Metropolitan Council, the Capitol Region Watershed District, and others have put millions of dollars on the line. Those investments were not made for the vision of single-story commercial development. How can taxpayers and partners have confidence in making future investments if the city cannot abide by its land use planning commitments?

The real estate market for multi-family development is weak right now across the Twin Cities. Development markets are cyclical, with highs and lows. When creating the Master Plan, the city expected that Highland Bridge development could take a decade and would likely have to ride out some low years in the development cycle. It was not the intent to build low scale development during the low years. The development market will return, and the city should wait for the high tax base and vitality that the underlying zoning and Master Plan envision and enable for this land.

After the millions of dollars of investment that's already been made by the city and others on this site, we cannot afford to have a diminished product in the short term because we are at a low point in the market. We need to be patient to get a great project for the long-term -- one that is consistent with the zoning, the Master Plan, and the tax base potential of this site.

The city has a lot to lose and little to gain by approving the legally tenuous variance requests and allowing the uninspired and lower value development proposed by Ryan Companies for these blocks. If the city approves the variances to height and floor area ratio, it exposes itself to a potential legal challenge that would forestall development, impose unnecessary cost to taxpayers, and would likely succeed.

Please uphold the BZA decision and oppose the height and floor area ratio variances for proposed development at 2200 Ford Parkway.

Thank you,

Merritt

Merritt Clapp-Smith

228 East 8th St, 55101

From: Tor Olsson
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Public Comment for 2/12/2025 City Council Meeting Re. Housing at Highland Bridge
Date: Sunday, February 9, 2025 4:44:24 PM

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Dear Councilmembers,

As a Saint Paul resident concerned with our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, I urge you to vote against Ryan Companies appeal, and uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan Company's 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

In all the years of planning and community engagement on the Ford Site, there was never a point where a single story strip mall and surface parking lot was envisioned for this site. Saint Paul doesn't need another low-tax capacity, car dependent strip mall. We need what the Ford Master Plan and zoning of this site calls for: mixed use, transit oriented, high density development that will meaningfully contribute to our City's tax capacity for the long term.

Ryan Companies has stated openly that their proposal is due to rent stabilization, market forces and financing. These issues are real, but they aren't legal justifications for variances. Under Minnesota state law, variances like these can only be approved if the applicant can demonstrate undue hardship related to unique physical characteristics of the property; economic hardships are insufficient.

Even more absurd than these variance requests, is that Ryan has also requested $18 million in TIF public subsidy for this project.

Please stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility and the thousands of hours of staff and resident time that went into creating the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Sincerely,
Tor Olsson
1720 Berkeley Ave, St Paul, MN 55105

From:	Devin Fischer
To:	Rebecca Noecker; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council; CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Subject:	ABZA 25-1 - Ryan Ford Site Appeal
Date:	Sunday, February 9, 2025 1:40:44 PM

Councilmember Noecker,

As a Ward 2 resident concerned with our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, I urge you to vote against Ryan Companies' appeal and uphold the BZA's decision to deny their 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

Throughout the years of planning and extensive community engagement on the Ford Site, there was never a vision for a single-story strip mall with a surface parking lot. Saint Paul does not need another low-tax capacity, car-dependent strip mall. What we need—and what the Ford Master Plan and zoning for this site were designed to deliver—is a mixed-use, transit-oriented, high-density development that will meaningfully contribute to our City's long-term tax base.

Ryan Companies has openly cited rent stabilization, market forces, and financing challenges as reasons for their proposal. While these issues are real, they do not constitute legal justifications for variances. Even more concerning is their request for $18 million in TIF public subsidies for this project.

I urge you to stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility, and the countless hours of staff and resident effort that went into shaping the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Sincerely,
Devin Fischer
325 Daly Street
St. Paul, MN 55102

From: Cody Fischer
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1
Cc: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council; Polly Heintz
Subject: ABZA 25-1 - Ryan Ford Site Appeal
Date: Sunday, February 9, 2025 1:10:48 PM

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Councilmember Bowie -

As a Ward 1 resident concerned with our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, **I urge you to vote against Ryan Companies appeal, and uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan's variance requests** for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

In all the years of planning and community engagement on the Ford Site, there was never a point where a single story strip mall and surface parking lot was envisioned for this site. Saint Paul doesn't need another low-tax capacity, car dependent strip mall. We need what the Ford Master Plan and zoning of this site calls for: mixed use, transit oriented, high density development that will meaningfully contribute to our City's tax capacity for the long term.

Ryan Companies has stated openly that their proposal is due to rent stabilization, market forces and financing. These issues are real, but they aren't legal justifications for variances. Under Minnesota state law, variances like these can only be approved if the applicant can demonstrate undue hardship related to unique physical characteristics of the property; economic hardships are insufficient.

The applicant claims that geological site conditions (shallow bedrock & perched water table) pose a "Practical Difficulty" for them to comply with the site's height and FAR requirements. Under MN law, a Practical Difficulty like this is required to legally grant a variance request.

As an experienced local developer of 3-5 story mixed-use buildings, with deep knowledge of the geotechnical, structural, and cost considerations involved in such projects....I can assure you that the "Practical Difficulties" cited by the applicant are not credible. These conditions are routinely dealt with using methods typical in multi-story construction.

The fact that the applicant is proposing a 2-story below grade parking structure is clear evidence that the "Practical Difficulties" cited pose no difficulty whatsoever.

Even more absurd than these variance requests, is that Ryan has also requested $18 million in TIF public subsidy for this project.

Please stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility and the thousands of hours of staff and resident time that went into creating the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Sincerely,
Cody Fischer
1017 Ashland Avenue

From: Craig Smith
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Agenda item 23, council meeting 2/12, regarding Ryan Companies variance request
Date: Sunday, February 9, 2025 12:16:36 PM

You don't often get email from craigsmithmn@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important

Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing about agenda item 23, for the 2/12 city council meeting, regarding the proposed variance from Ryan Companies. I am struggling to find any justification for this. There is little offered in the staff report. This would clearly be a long term loss to the tax base and a visual eyesore at one of the most prominent entries to St Paul

The tax payers of St Paul have been very generous in building out the infrastructure and amenities at the Ford Site. The expectation is that we will reap the rewards of that investment with long term tax revenue. There is no significant hardship to justify this very significant variance, especially while so much of the site remains undeveloped. I do not want strip mall developments in any of St Paul, but Highland Bridge is a gem that deserves so much more. Do not let Ryan Companies pressure you into lowering our standards at our long term expense. There is nothing to be gained from this variance for tax payers and residents. Ryan Companies needs to do better.

If the city is looking for ways to encourage the development of these lots in the spirit of the master plan, a better variance would be to exempt any new development on the site from rent stabilization regulations for a period of time that would give investors greater confidence in their investments. I understand the variance cannot be solely on the basis of economic conditions but the threat of rent stabilization is one that will continue to challenge this site. Let's get ahead of that now. If not, I would propose we allow these lots to remain undeveloped until a more pro-housing environment has been established that allows for building to the standards of the original plan, providing the tax revenue to pay for the already built infrastructure and amenities.

Craig Smith
228 E 8th St
St Paul

From:	Galen Benshoof
To:	#CI-StPaul_Ward1
Cc:	CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul); *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject:	ABZA 25-1 - Ryan Ford Site Appeal - please vote No
Date:	Sunday, February 9, 2025 10:04:22 AM

Councilmember Bowie,

As a Ward 1 resident concerned with our St. Paul's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, I ask you to vote against Ryan Companies appeal. It is very important to uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan Company's 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

In all the years of planning and community engagement on the Ford Site, there was never a point where a single-story strip mall and surface parking lot was envisioned for this site. Our city doesn't need another low-tax-capacity, car-dependent strip mall. We need what the Ford Master Plan and zoning of this site calls for: mixed use, transit oriented, high density development that will meaningfully contribute to our City's tax capacity for the long term.

Please stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility and the thousands of hours of staff and resident time that went into creating the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Thank you,

Galen Benshoof
1068 Laurel Ave

From: Kate Fischer
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1; *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council; CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul)
Subject: ABZA 25-1 - Ryan Ford Site Appeal
Date: Saturday, February 8, 2025 6:43:41 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from kbfisch@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Councilmember Bowie,

As a resident of Ward 1 and someone who is deeply invested in our city's future, I urge you to oppose Ryan Companies' appeal and support the BZA's decision to reject their 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

Throughout the extensive planning and community involvement in the Ford Site development, the vision was never for a single-story strip mall and surface parking lot. Saint Paul deserves more than another car-dependent retail space with limited tax benefits. What our community truly needs, as outlined in the Ford Master Plan and zoning regulations, is a vibrant, mixed-use, transit-friendly development that enhances our tax base sustainably.

While Ryan Companies cite rent stabilization, market challenges, and financing as reasons for their proposal, these do not justify bypassing zoning regulations.

Even more concerning is Ryan's request for an $18 million TIF public subsidy, in addition to their variance requests.

I urge you to prioritize equitable housing, climate resilience, fiscal accountability, and honor the countless hours residents and city staff dedicated to crafting the Ford Master Plan. Please reject Ryan's appeal.

We can and must do better.

Sincerely,

Kate Fischer
1017 Ashland Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55104
(847) 602-2200

From:	Melissa
To:	Rebecca Noecker
Cc:	CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul); *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject:	Protect Saint Paul's Future – Deny Ryan Companies' Appeal
Date:	Saturday, February 8, 2025 3:52:53 PM

Dear Council Member Noecker,

As a Ward 2 resident deeply invested in the future of our city—its financial health, climate resilience, and housing abundance—I urge you to stand with the community and vote against Ryan Companies' appeal. Please uphold the BZA's decision to deny their 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

For years, residents and city staff poured their time, energy, and voices into shaping a bold, forward-thinking vision for the Ford Site. Not once did that vision include a single-story strip mall with a sea of surface parking. Saint Paul does not need another low-value, car-centric development that will drain our tax base for decades to come. We need what the Ford Master Plan calls for: a thriving, transit-oriented, high-density community that will create homes, strengthen our economy, and build a more sustainable future.

Ryan Companies claims their proposal is necessary due to rent stabilization, market conditions, and financing challenges. These may be real obstacles, but they are not legal justifications for such extreme variances. Granting them would set a dangerous precedent—one that undermines years of careful planning and disregards the public interest.

Even more troubling, Ryan is also requesting $18 million in TIF subsidies for this project. A public handout for a project that ignores the city's vision? That's not just bad policy—it's an insult to every resident who worked to create a better future for this site.

You have the power to protect our city's future. Please stand up for smart growth, climate action, and fiscal responsibility by rejecting Ryan's appeal. Honor the thousands of hours of community effort that went into shaping the Ford Master Plan. Saint Paul deserves better.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wenzel
349 Michigan Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

From: PATRICIA ENSTAD
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Cc: Nelsie Yang
Subject: Ryan request for variances
Date: Saturday, February 8, 2025 10:33:36 AM

You don't often get email from pattyenst@mac.com. Learn why this is important

Dear Councilmembers,

As a Saint Paul resident concerned with our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, I urge you to vote against Ryan Companies appeal, and uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan Company's 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway.

As a member of the Payne-Phalen Community Council who has been involved in many many discussions around land use for projects (including the Heights), I find this a very alarming proposal. The council needs to think long and hard about the kind of precedent this would set, and the impact it could have on the city as a whole. I am not speaking for the PPCC in this comment, but from my significant experience.

I understand that Ryan Companies has stated openly that their proposal is due to rent stabilization, market forces and financing. These issues are real, but they aren't legal justifications for variances. Under Minnesota state law, variances like these can only be approved if the applicant can demonstrate undue hardship related to unique physical characteristics of the property; economic hardships are insufficient.
Is this the appropriate process for addressing their concerns?

Even more absurd than these variance requests, is that Ryan has also requested $18 million in TIF public subsidy for this project.

Please stand up for housing, climate resilience, fiscal responsibility and the thousands of hours of staff and resident time that went into creating the Ford Master Plan by denying Ryan's appeal.

Sincerely,
Patricia Enstad
984 Hyacinth Ave E
Saint Paul, MN

From: James Slegers
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Deny variances at 0 Cretin and 2200 Ford Pkwy
Date: Saturday, February 8, 2025 9:52:33 AM

You don't often get email from james.slegers@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Council members,

Community members went through a lengthy engagement process several years ago to develop a master plan for the Ford site that meets the city's needs - more housing, stronger tax base, density and transit access. This was passed as a unified plan.

Ryan Company's variance requests do not site any unique physical hardships related to this site which could form the legal basis for a variance. That alone should settle the matter.

The community did not ask for and the master plan does not envision a strip mall with acres of parking. Please vote to uphold the BZAs decision and deny variances.

Thank you,
James Slegers
Hamline Midway, Ward 4

From: Luke Hanson
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Deny Ryan Companies" variance requests
Date: Saturday, February 8, 2025 9:39:23 AM

Dear Councilmembers,

As a Saint Paul resident concerned with our City's long-term fiscal health, climate resilience, and housing abundance, I urge you to vote against Ryan Companies appeal, and uphold the BZA's decision to deny Ryan Company's 26 Height & FAR variance requests for 0 Cretin Ave & 2200 Ford Parkway. Here are a few reasons why:

1. **Granting the variance request would break Minnesota law**, which requires that an applicant for a zoning variance demonstrate undue hardship related to unique physical attributes of the property. Ryan Companies has not been able to demonstrate this, and have admitted that the real reasons for their variance requests are economic (e.g. the City's rent stabilization ordinance has made it all but impossible to secure financing for the 4-story residential building called for in the Master Plan). These economic reasons are unfortunate, but not grounds for a variance request.
2. **Inappropriate procedure.** City staff and engaged citizens spent thousands of hours deliberating on the Ford Site Master Plan which set the zoning rules for the Highland Bridge site. Procedurally, the appropriate mechanism by which Ryan Companies could have (and still could) pursue zoning changes would be a Master Plan Amendment– not 26 variance requests through an obscure zoning board that most community members don't know exists and whose meetings are inaccessible. To approve these variance requests and circumvent the Master Plan Amendment process would be to casually disregard years of public engagement and staff work and undermine public trust.
3. **Saint Paul needs more homes– not more one-story strip malls.** Housing experts have found that Saint Paul (and the Twin Cities metro in general) face a severe housing shortage; this shortage is causing rents and home prices to rise and exacerbating housing unaffordability and homelessness. Building more homes– even market-rate apartments– is among the best ways to respond to this crisis.
4. **Saint Paul sorely needs development that expands the tax base.** Saint Paul residents are feeling burdened by property tax increases; the City Council just spent months sparring with the Mayor about passing a budget that would increase property taxes by 5% instead of 7%. The best way to mitigate Saint Paul's fiscal hardships in the long-term is to facilitate the development of buildings that produce relatively more tax revenue. A four-story apartment buildings (the use required for this parcel in the Master Plan) would produce far more tax revenue each year than a strip mall with a big parking lot (what Ryan Companies aims to build instead). Saint Paul needs to resist the short-sighted temptation to settle for low-value development at the expense of its long-term fiscal resilience: having the discipline

to wait for high-quality development and greater tax revenue is worth the wait.

Thank you for your consideration.

Luke Hanson
1423 Eleanor Avenue

From: Bill Kenney
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council; David Eide
Subject: HB 2B-2C Variance Letter of Support
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 7:05:00 PM
Attachments: HB 2B-2C Variance Letter of Support.pdf

You don't often get email from bkenney@dermatologyconsultants.com. Learn why this is important

Bill Kenney

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February 7,2025

St. Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55102

Email: Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us
CC: David.Eide@ci.stpaul.mn.us

RE: BZA Action Appeal, 2200 Ford Parkway (24-095781) and 0 Cretin Avenue (24-096392)

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Highland Bridge Block 2B and 2C development, located at the intersection of Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue. This project will bring significant benefits to both our neighborhood and the broader Highland Park area.

The proposed development aligns with the community's vision by offering a vibrant mixed-use space, **providing much-needed housing**, **retail**, and **amenities to Highland Park** and the City, **enriching the neighborhood and enhancing its character**. The requested variances are reasonable, well-considered and necessary for the applicant given the various constraints of the physical site and broader external factors that have occurred since the adoption of the Ford Site Master Plan and Zoning Code.

I care deeply about the future of our neighborhood, and I am confident that this development will be a positive addition. I respectfully urge the City Council to overturn the BZA's ruling, approve the variances and fully support the project's implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

William O. Kenney

681 Mount Curve Blvd

Saint Paul, MN 55116

From: S Willis
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Highland Bridge Development
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 6:04:17 PM

You don't often get email from sfwillis143@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Hello,
I read about the new proposals from Ryan Corp for the Highland Bridge development.
Please do NOT allow them to deviate from the master plan. They were given this lucrative job, and the job was to benefit the people of St Paul long term based on the merit of the master plan.
They are interested in money, not our community's well being.
I appreciate your time and consideration,
Susan Willis
Merriam Park