

Dear City Council Members and Legislative Aides:

Please find attached a response to the Area 21 Permit Parking Petition that is scheduled to be heard on Wednesday, March 21, 2012. I have been authorized by my neighbors to speak in part for them in addressing our concerns in regard to the petition. In addition to the response, you will find a parking survey that was conducted over the last six weeks as well as photographic evidence in support of that survey. Please take the time to review these materials, and I look forward to seeing all of you at the hearing.

Sincerely:

Lenny Russo
1937 Lincoln Avenue
Saint Paul Ward 4

On behalf of the residents of Lincoln Avenue east of Prior and some surrounding streets, I would like to thank the City Council for allowing us the time to present our views concerning the proposed extension of Area 21. While we understand that there is a reasonable time limit for each speaker, we are respectfully asking that you indulge us in so far as I am speaking for a large number of residents. We feel that this will not only encapsulate our individual concerns but will also serve to expedite things by allowing you to hear our voices jointly.

We would like to begin by asking you to immediately dismiss this petition on the grounds that the city code calls for any petition that seeks to add or subtract from a permit parking area to bear the signatures of at least 75% of the property owners in the proposed area. By their own admission, the petitioners have acquired only 68% of those signatures needed. In lieu of that, we are prepared to offer for your consideration arguments against the petition which are contained in the four points which follow, include photographic evidence and which answer the claims that have been previously put forth in favor of an extension of Area 21.

1) While those of us who live on Lincoln Avenue east of Prior are sensitive to the issues concerning the safety of children on the block of Lincoln west of Prior, that should not be sufficient cause to justify the parking permits. We strongly feel it should be the responsibility of those parents to keep their children safe by instilling in them, as all good parents do, an awareness of traffic dangers. It should not be the responsibility of the city to enforce what we see as unreasonable additional parking restrictions just because there are children residing on a particular block. Current traffic laws address the speed limit. Assuming that extending the permit parking area will reduce the incidence of speeding and make the street safer for children is speculative at best.

2) While we also believe that everyone should have the right to manage the quality of life within their own neighborhoods, that shouldn't give them the right to adversely affect the quality of life of their neighbors. The people who purchased their homes within walking distance of a bus stop, a university and multiple apartment buildings; have fire hydrants in front of their houses; or have garages or off street parking spaces that aren't sufficient to accommodate all of their vehicles should expect that parking for them will be more difficult. Providing themselves with as much off street parking as possible is the best way to make sure that this issue doesn't affect them. Having multiple vehicles in one household should not justify the need for a parking permit district. Children who are living at home with their parents and who drive their own cars contribute in some part to the shortage of parking on that stretch of Lincoln. Most of us living on Lincoln east of Prior never owned cars when we lived with our parents. We walked, rode bicycles or took public transportation. A car is a luxury that

comes with many inconveniences and responsibilities as well as benefits. One of those inconveniences is finding a place to park. If an automobile is one's chosen mode of transportation, then one should take responsibility for that choice rather than shirking that responsibility by impacting one's neighbors through what we contend is an unnecessary extension of the permit parking area.

Again, while those of us residing on Lincoln Avenue east of Prior believe that people have a right to help create and manage the quality of life within their neighborhood, they should have no right to do so at the expense of their neighbors. While the quality of their lives might, in their opinion, be improved, others might have theirs diluted. Are we to take the same approach in response to this and push our perceived problems off on others? That seems unfair and quite a bit less than neighborly. We contend that this type of behavior only serves to pit neighbor against neighbor. We do not wish to help create a city that fosters these sorts of conflicts by allowing one group to impose its desires upon another with little or no consideration of the consequences.

4) We contend that the policy of allowing people to impose parking permit areas without proper city oversight and review is badly flawed. Just because one group follows the established protocol shouldn't, in and of itself, justify the imposition of parking restrictions. The city website states that some sort of review by the city's department by Traffic Engineering will be conducted, but we have seen no evidence of those findings.

At the last meeting of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council Transportation Committee, during which a hearing was conducted on this matter, that question was posed to Elizabeth Stiffler of the St. Paul Department of Public Works who was present at the meeting to answer such questions. The eventual answer to that question was that no substantive review of the parking situation on Lincoln Avenue west of Prior that is not currently included in Area 21 has been done. In response to that, we have conducted our own assessment of the available parking on that stretch of Lincoln.

Let us begin by doing two things.

First of all, we would like it to be on the record that those of us who do not reside on Lincoln within the proposed extension area, were not from the outset duly notified or informed of these petition efforts by the Macalester-Groveland Community Council or the City of St. Paul. As such, we had very little time to coordinate a response to them. Once we coordinated that response, we were virtually shut out of the Community Council's proceedings. We were given very little time to present our concerns compared to what was granted the petitioners. We were continuously informed that we would be unable to verbally present our findings and concerns, but the petitioners were granted unlimited time to present theirs. The whole process served to disenfranchise us. In addition, we were dismissed during the Council's Transportation Committee meeting since we were only able to evaluate parking conditions during the St. Thomas "J term". Consequently, we reevaluated those conditions subsequent to the beginning of the St. Thomas spring semester, which began on January 30th and ran uninterrupted until spring break on March 19th, as was suggested by those in attendance who support the measure in question. We again presented our case at the Community Council meeting during which the final vote was taken to approve their petition. Once again, we were dismissed with the statement that our findings did not reflect a long enough time frame to be valid. We have continued to track the parking since that time, and we have seen no significant differences during any of the times we have conducted our studies.

Next, we would like to explain our methodology. We used the average length of a midsize vehicle

which is 8 to 9 feet by American standards to approximate the number of vacant parking spaces. Vacancies were counted as opposed to the number of cars parked since we believe that better illustrates the availability of parking instead of the perceived lack of parking. The surveys were taken at varying times during midday spread out over a nearly 5 hour period of time. We realize that without recording license plate numbers and asking for the SPPD to track the ownership of each vehicle, we were unable to determine how many of the parked cars belonged to the residents of that stretch of Lincoln Avenue, but we believe our observations have shown that the majority of cars parked there belong to residents of that block. The results follow.

*Monday 1/30 @ 1:00 PM 20 vacant spaces
Tuesday 1/31 @ 12:00 PM 15 vacant spaces
Wednesday 2/1 @ 12:30 PM 16 vacant spaces
Thursday 2/2 @ 11:30 AM 16 vacant spaces
Friday 2/3 @ 12:30 PM 39 vacant spaces*

*Monday 2/6 @ 2:15 PM 19 vacant spaces
Tuesday 2/7 @ 3:45 PM 28 vacant spaces
Wednesday 2/8 @ 12:45 PM 29 vacant spaces
Thursday 2/9 @ 11:00 AM 13 vacant spaces
Friday 2/10 @ 12:30 PM 34 vacant spaces*

*Monday 2/13 @ 1:30 PM 24 vacant spaces
Tuesday 2/14 @ 12:30 PM 39 vacant spaces
Wednesday 2/15 @ 12:45 PM 34 vacant spaces
Thursday 2/16 @ 12:00 PM 31 vacant spaces
Friday 2/17 @ 12:35 PM 44 vacant spaces*

*Monday 2/20 @ 2:30 PM 31 vacant spaces
Tuesday 2/21 @ 8:00 AM 42 vacant spaces
Wednesday 2/22 @ 11:30 AM 10 vacant spaces
Thursday 2/23 @ 11:45 AM 19 vacant spaces
Friday 2/24 @ 11:45 AM 32 vacant spaces*

*Monday 2/27 @ 1:30 PM 25 vacant spaces
Tuesday 2/28 @ 12:15 PM 26 vacant spaces
Wednesday 2/29 @ 1:00 PM 42 vacant spaces
Thursday 3/1 SNOW EMERGENCY
Friday 3/2 @ 11:45 AM 36 vacant spaces*

*Monday 3/5 @ 10:15 AM 29 vacant spaces
Tuesday 3/6 @ 10:00 AM 19 vacant spaces
Wednesday 3/7 @ 9:45 AM 39 vacant spaces
Thursday 3/8 @ 11:15 AM 30 vacant spaces
Friday 3/9 @ 11:45 AM 32 vacant spaces*

Monday 3/12 @ 10:30 AM 28 vacant spaces
Tuesday 3/13 @ 12:00 PM 24 vacant spaces
Wednesday 3/14 @ 11:50 AM 12 vacant spaces
Thursday 3/15 @ 11:20 AM 24 vacant spaces
Friday 3/16 @ 11:20 AM 41 vacant spaces

Our survey shows that there have been between 10 and 42 vacant spaces on that stretch of Lincoln during the times the parking has been evaluated. Given these results, we contend that the extension of Area 21 is unwarranted.

5) In conclusion, we would like to make one last point. The people who have petitioned to impose this parking restriction on their block have essentially expropriated a public thoroughfare. In doing so, they are asking the city to allow them to turn a public street into their own private parking lot. We do not believe that they have demonstrated to us or to this Council sufficient evidence to support the need for such a drastic step. Prohibiting free access to public parking impedes the free flow of those who live there, work in the neighborhood, patronize businesses, attend schools, congregate at churches and gather for social events. Pushing more and more vehicles into a smaller and smaller area should only serve to exacerbate whatever shortage of parking might already exist. In addition, as avid supporters of mass transit, we are very concerned about how the city plans on accommodating commuters once the new Central Corridor light rail line is fully operational since bus lines will be redirected through our neighborhood in order to feed the line. Where will the commuters park if all the streets surrounding bus stops are deemed residential parking only? How unwelcoming and dysfunctional do we wish to make our city before people will no longer want to live in or to visit St. Paul? In the best interests of all citizens, we strongly oppose the extension of Area 21.