

Dear Mayor Coleman and Councilmember Tolbert:

I just returned from my morning round sticking litter into a grocery bag to keep my block relatively clean. Along the way, I note with approval, as usual, the neat new landscaping fronting the new Walgreens, and adjacent parcels east and west of it on Ford Parkway, to and along Finn Street. Walgreen's current management is doing a great job maintaining these recent improvements.

The recent Highland Villager article regarding the rest of the Village sidewalks and off-street landscaping is only the latest public airing of a perennial issue, namely whether or not the City of St. Paul cares about its own future.

I commend you, Councilmember Tolbert, for making the issue your top priority. I hope, Mayor Coleman, that you will, if necessary, overrule the CIB Committee's rankings and finally, after years and years and years, elevate this obvious need to the priority it deserves.

As to those of the business and business land owners objecting to the standard set by the Walgreens properties, I speak as a customer of theirs. My message is, if you want my money, stop whining about the cost of new sidewalks, lights and related street amenities. There are plenty of better-looking places I can go in St. Paul -- and Minneapolis, for that matter -- to do my shopping and, if your properties and their public accesses get any worse, I will. It's time to invest in the public areas that attract me and others to your land and the businesses on that land. It's time to compete. It's time to shut up and put up, or sell your properties and reinvest in someplace where public values don't matter.

As a Highland Park property tax payer I carry more than my fair share of city, county and school district expenses. Let's get something done.

Sincerely,

Mathews Hollinshead
Pinehurst Ave.
St. Paul