

Dear Mr. Lovejoy,

I'm Nicki Jones, owner of a martial arts school that is located in the 800 Transfer Rd. building in the West Midway Industrial Area. I'm writing in response to the draft Plan for the neighborhood.

I want to start by acknowledging that I don't own the kind of high value industrial business that the plan is most concerned with. Ours is a school with no full-time employees (besides the owners) that serves about 150 families from all over the Metro region -- and few of those families pay our tuition from salaries earned in these high value industrial type of jobs.

It is because of how removed my life, both personally and professionally, is from those types of jobs that my first recommendation or comment is this: until I read through the information on the website, I hadn't known how integral those types of jobs are to the health of our region and the effect those jobs have on the overall economic health of a region. Please make this information, and the studies that back up that fact, the most important piece of information you try to get "out there" to the general public. Those of us who haven't had anyone in our families or our peer groups working in this sector *really don't know anything about jobs like this or their relative importance to our own jobs and lives*. Making that information available, giving those of us who know nothing the chance to learn something strikes me as being an incredibly important piece of gathering and keeping support for a Plan like this one. Otherwise, in our ignorance, folks like me are able to dismiss an Industrial Plan as being out-dated and irrelevant: "Of course a small brewery is a cool addition to the neighborhood, so we should convert more un- or under-used industrial space to things like breweries and artist lofts and coffee shops and art galleries." Or so the easy, ill-informed thinking goes.

It's an interesting position to be in: I now have a better understanding of what's best for the region, but I still also have a real interest in my own business's health. We chose our location for many of the same reasons that the Midway has been a great industrial location -- it's a midway point between the two downtowns, proximity to I-94, proximity to the Green Line LRT, affordable rent, ample parking for students. I want to support the Plan for the overall health of the region and keep an eye on and a voice in the process to advocate for my own business and others like it in the area.

Now that you know where I'm coming from, here are some thoughts and comments:

- I'm very pleased with what I've seen so far of the Plan. I commend everyone involved on the care with which they are juggling the sometimes-competing tensions of economics, social factors, and environmental concerns.
- I'm a member of Women on Bikes, an organization that specifically advocates for safe and ample opportunities for women (and children) to use bicycles for transportation and recreation. I would strongly encourage the folks involved in the WMIP and the City of St. Paul Bikeways Plan to get together and work towards integration and mutual support of each others' plans. There are a lot of proposed improvements to bikeways in the West Midway area, and I would love to see them implemented as part of the WMIP. Reuben Collins of the City of Saint Paul is a great contact: reuben.collins@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

- I would be happy to be more involved, as a representative of a business owner in the area outside of the industrial/manufacturing industries. I would be happy to liaise with other business owners and help move information out about the WMIP and in about the concerns or support from other non-industrial businesses in the area. Please let me know if there is any need for this kind of support.

I do plan to attend the public hearing on March 21. I'd like to again express my gratitude and support for everyone who has been involved in getting the Plan to this stage, and I look forward to learning and hearing more as things progress.

Thank you!

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