

Dear Council President Lantry -

I wrote Councilman, David Thune, a friend for over 30 years but forward a copy to you because this issue is important to our beautiful City of St. Paul. Thank you for considering this issue.

Ted Lentz

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ted Lentz** <ted@tedlentz.com>

Date: Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 2:00 PM

Subject: Summit Avenue - Known and beloved throughout the US

To: ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us

David -

Over the years planning and designing hospitals throughout the US, when I was introduced as a resident of St. Paul, a board member, city councilman or doctor often responded with comments and questions about Summit Avenue. Most of these exchanges were similar but I would like to share one distinctive exchange.

In the northwestern Pennsylvania town of Corry, Pennsylvania at a reception & dinner to celebrate the gift of 40 acres for the new hospital from local husband and wife philanthropists that well-travelled couple invited me to their table because they were told that I lived in St. Paul on Summit Avenue. The wife loved Summit Avenue but she also loved St. Paul's Garrison Keillor. She and her husband listened to Garrison Keillor and enjoyed attending one of his live performances. I told her that Garrison had just purchased a home on Summit Avenue and would be moving in soon. She asked

"Is Garrison buying one of those great, immense houses on Summit?"

Thinking of Garrison's neighboring houses, the James J. Hill House, the Louis Hill House and the red stone Weyerhauser house I told her

" Not too big- actually quite livable size"

" How big?"

" Around 12,000 to 15,000 square feet."

Her burst of laughter stopped all other dinner talk. Still laughing, with tears flowing she shared with fifty some other guests what I had told her. Everyone laughed trying to imagine a street where a home, larger than any in their corner of the State of Pennsylvania, would be considered modest.

Summit Avenue is pretty remarkable. A work of great architecture not because of one great architect but from the successive design input over 150 years of home owners, architects and city

officials . Home owners who made thousands of small decisions that with the support of City officials worked to create a nationally recognized public treasure.

Today if you travel the US and speak of the Twin Cities Minneapolis is cited as the home of the Twins and Vikings and St. Paul the home of the Minnesota State Capitol and Summit Avenue. One hundred years in the future football and baseball will have gone the way of marathon dance contests but the Minnesota State Capitol and Summit Avenue should still be well respected treasures of St. Paul.

344 Summit rezoning for a commercial use was an idea I initially liked because I accepted John Rupp's statements about the impossibility of retaining Summit as a purely residential street. I supported John's quest to rezone 344 Summit until I dug deeper and discovered that the past couple of years has seen millions of dollars invested in owner occupied houses on Summit and the immediately adjacent blocks.

So I changed my mind and wrote John about that change and my reasoning.

One more observation. In the original restrictive zoning on Summit owners of seven parcels certified that since they purchased their properties for commercial use, restricting the property to residential use reduced the resale value. Each of those owners were permitted to continue the commercial apartment use but were reimbursed for their economic loss with money raised from the Summit Avenue property owners.

Now, 100 years later, six of those seven properties have been converted from commercial apartments to owner-occupied condominiums. Over the past century hundred of decisions supported the original Summit Avenue resident's belief that the highest and best economic use for the properties on Summit is owner-occupied residential.

We should give this private home ownership program more time to work - say another 30 years. In the mid 1970's many of us believed that the inspiring example of Irvine Park Historic District would prove a successful model to halt rapid decline of Summit Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods. Mostly the Irvine Park example proved a successful model.

We should not permit property on Summit Avenue to be zoned Commercial.

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Ted Lentz, Architect

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