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May 6, 2015

City Council President Russ Stark  
Saint Paul City Council  
15 West Kellogg Boulevard, 310-D  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

RE: West Side Flats Draft Master Plan—Saint Paul Port Authority Comments

Dear Council President Stark:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the City Council with comments and recommendations on this Draft Plan. The Port Authority appreciates the significant work of the City in preparing the Plan for public comment, and we are pleased to continue to be a part of this important process. We have been working cooperatively for about two years with the City on this process.

The following comments pertain to the December 5, 2014 Draft.

We appreciate and agree with the Draft Plan recommendations for public transit on Robert Street, state-of-the-art storm water system enhancements, green amenities, and pedestrian-friendly streets. These are exciting elements. We do suggest that new language be added to the Plan that specifies a creative approach to storm water management implementation that includes the public and private sectors, and the community, collaborating on system types and specific locations.

The Vision outlined in the Plan describes an urban community, connected to the river, with jobs as an important component. We couldn't agree more.

The West Side Flats area of Saint Paul is vitally important for residents, and for commerce and the jobs that businesses offer. Residential options are increasing with recent new construction and additional units proposed. And both West Side Flats businesses and nearby river shipping companies are significant employers that offer good wages; they are also major contributors to the Saint Paul economy and its fiscal health. We request that all industrial uses east of Robert Street be maintained.

#### Concerns and Recommendations:

The goal of the Saint Paul Port Authority is to support the existing industrial uses in the area and preserve the space for industrial uses in the future. The Port Authority's objective is to protect industrial land.

We believe that this Plan has the opportunity to provide strong, positive messages to both the business and residential communities. The Plan should state unequivocally that West Side Flats businesses are valuable to the City and its residents, for their jobs at good wages, property taxes and investments, and overall economic vibrancy in Saint Paul's marketplace.

We recommend that the Plan also be amended to state that—consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan—there will be strong business retention efforts and recognition of the economic assets of businesses in the area.

The opportunity for a deeper relationship between businesses with labor needs and nearby residents that need good jobs should be clearly identified in amended language, as well.

The following are additional concerns and recommendations:

- **Tone:** The Plan has an overall tone that the existing industrial businesses are a negative for the area, regarding their density, the size of business lots, the parking lots, and the jobs. Additionally, although the Planning Commission deleted the Proposed New Street Grid Map, the language remains in various sections of the Plan that these issues should be fixed by the development of extensive public infrastructure to create smaller blocks, some of which would be placed through existing business properties.

We recommend that this Plan show amended language that clearly recognizes the worth of these businesses and their importance to the community and City; the intent of the City to retain and promote the growth of these businesses; and the deletion of language calling for smaller blocks.

- **New City Park:** The location for a recommended new park should not be where an ongoing business is located.

We recommend amended language that proposes a different location.

- **Red Cross Property:** This property south of Fillmore Street along Robert Street to Plato Boulevard has been identified as needing to be re-zoned to T3M from I-1. We understand from staff that the thought is to ensure more dense development along the future Robert Street transit line, and that the vision is not to replace Red Cross with new housing.

We recommend instead that this property be zoned into the IT classification. Given the R&D, testing, and other activities of the Red Cross, this use is appropriate for the IT category.

Council President Stark, we have recently been working with the City to discuss language amendments that we believe will provide a Plan that clearly recognizes the worth of these existing businesses. There is now a key opportunity to improve this Draft Plan. There is also an opportunity for the City, Port Authority, community, and businesses to collaborate in the future to bring more jobs to area residents and to accomplish the excellent vision of this Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to review our thoughts about this Draft Plan, and to provide helpful language to provide a better and more balanced Plan.

Sincerely,



Louis F. Jambois  
President

cc: Lorrie Louder