

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Please carefully re-consider the Parkland Dedication ordinance. If the current proposal is passed, St. Paul will continue to have a weak ordinance for years to come. The ordinance that has been in effect since 2007 is widely accepted to be ineffective. By replacing the ineffective ordinance with another weak one, St. Paul is selling itself short.

If the fear is that a strong ordinance would deter development, why then hasn't the 2007 weak ordinance skewed development in favor of St. Paul? According to MPR, Minneapolis is on track to break its economic development record for the third year in a row. Minneapolis, and most of our neighbors, have 10% parkland dedication.

Perhaps development is happening BECAUSE they are funding their parks and trails as development occurs and building green space into their communities in the process. For example, the Midtown Greenway sparked \$200 million in development, with 10% dedication. Now, there is a healthy tax base to support maintenance of the Greenway. A basic, fundamental way to approach economic development and it is working for our neighbors.

On the agenda for Wednesday, August 26, is a proposal for St. Paul to support a soccer stadium that would be removed from the property tax rolls forever. The item immediately following is the Parkland Dedication ordinance. Therefore, the citizens of St. Paul are being asked to fund a privately-held professional soccer stadium while at the same time no money would be set aside for kids in the community to play soccer in a public park.

St. Paul will continue to fall farther and farther behind when compared to what our neighbors are doing in terms of building the economic asset that green space actually is. In addition to the many other great effects of parks, studies show time and time again that parks are a positive economic development tool.

Case in point: with the proposed ordinance it is likely there would be little or no parkland on the Ford Site. When for-profit companies are given the option to donate land that could otherwise be developed to generate profit, what do you suppose the outcome would be? Even if they felt so benevolent, the draft includes a maximum of 0.5% dedication for commercial and industrial development. Most other cities in the metro require 10%. Given that the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce is advocating for 0.00% for commercial and industrial, a prediction of little or no parkland seems accurate.

Even for residential development, 4.5% is less than half of what most other communities collect and the same is true for the proposed per unit fee that is embedded in the ordinance. By embedding it,

the fee is impossible to change without re-visiting the ordinance again. Additionally, there are multiple exemptions built into the ordinance, making it difficult to reach the low maximums. St. Paul has been advertising the Ford site as a “world-class development.” How will that be accomplished with such an ordinance?

I urge you to re-consider the Parkland Dedication ordinance and to support the amendments that Friends of the Parks and Trails proposed. At stake is a fundamental philosophy of how we build our city for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Carol J. Mccarty
Highland Pkwy.
St. Paul, MN 55116