

**From:** Naomi Kritzer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 03, 2016 2:21 PM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward3  
**Subject:** Victoria Park development project appeal

Dear Councilman Tolbert,

I'm a St. Paul resident of your ward, and I'm writing to you about the Victoria Park development project appeal (which is scheduled for the St. Paul City Council meeting on Wednesday.)

Pedestrian safety around cars is something I've thought about a lot. I grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, where for decades we had a city traffic engineer who was absolutely convinced that traffic lights caused more accidents than they prevented and refused to install them. As a result, we had a number of horrifically dangerous intersections controlled by a four-way or two-way stop signs, one of them next to my high school. There was also an extremely busy street (similar in volume and speed to Snelling Ave) that ran past my grade school: when I was in fourth grade, one of my classmates was hit trying to cross it and spent several days in a coma. (She did eventually make a full recovery.) When my brother was thirteen, he was hit by a car coming out from a blind drive onto this same very busy street and suffered a broken arm and injured spleen. (Again, he made a full recovery.) I had several near-misses as a kid, with probably the most hair-raising the time someone decided to run a red light by pulling to the right around the traffic that was stopping and flooring their accelerator -- if I'd stepped off the curb a second earlier, I'd have been hit.

In the years since I grew up, I've seen a number of improvements in pedestrian safety become standard, but fundamentally, the more cars and pedestrians interact, the more likely we are to see a tragedy, which is why Snelling remains such an incredibly dangerous street. It has a *lot* of cars; it has a *lot* of pedestrians.

And this is why I am so worried about the planned 50-unit apartment building that Chase Development wants to build at the intersection of Mercer St, Kay Ave, and Victoria Way, and why I believe it was a huge mistake to term it a "minor deviation" from the Victoria Park Master Plan.

This neighborhood is already clogged with cars several times a day: at Nova dropoff and pickup, and during the Sholom Home shift change. At least once in a typical week I'll see an impatient person trying to barrel past the line of waiting cars by pulling into the lane of oncoming traffic and hitting the gas to (hopefully) beat any other cars that might be coming.

The current plan also has a driveway coming out of the underground parking garage right by the school. I can't imagine any way to build this that it would not have restricted sightlines and pose a serious hazard to pedestrians.

I live by a school (Talmud Torah of St. Paul / Cyber Village Academy) and a soccer field. On those occasions when the streets get really clogged, I take a back route to get out. If you look at the map of the Victoria Park neighborhood, you'll see that one of the issues for traffic flow is that it's backed up against a park, with fewer streets leading in and out than you might normally

expect. (Sholom Home sits where you might expect an additional through-street running either to Otto or to West 7th.)

Adding more apartment housing to Victoria Park that's set well back from Otto or West 7th seems like a self-evidently terrible idea.

I am deeply concerned that the newly-elected Rebecca Noecker is overly excited about the tax base potential of large buildings, and insufficiently concerned about the necessary balance between development and the health and needs of the neighborhood. The fact that the Fort Road Federation is opposed to this project should illustrate that this is about the health of the neighborhood, and not just Nova families being NIMBYs.

I am not opposed to density! But density needs to be well-thought-out and designed for; stacking large building after large building into residential-scale streets designed for townhomes and "mansion-style" small apartment houses creates overloaded streets that *cannot* be made safe for the pedestrians who have to use them.

I understand that for my comments to be considered by Councilmembers regarding Nova Classical Academy Appeal File # 16-026-302, they need to be entered in as public testimony. Please consider this my confirmation that my letter can be included in public testimony.

Thank you,  
Naomi Kritzer  
Nova Classical Academy Parent / Ward 3 Resident