

You will be making a decision on June 1, 2016, regarding parking and bike lanes on Upper Afton Road between Burns Avenue and McKnight Road. We are concerned about the process that was used to decide which alternative was presented to the City Council. Please look at the type of residential neighborhood this is and support the alternative that retains on-street parking on one side of the entire length of Upper Afton Road.

At the public open house (Battle Creek Recreation Center, March 3, 2016), there was overwhelming opposition from residents who actually live on Upper Afton Road to the proposal that removed all on-street parking west of White Bear Avenue. The written notice that we received after the open house stated that the design to be presented to the City Council would instead allow one-side parking along all of Upper Afton. This plan was apparently later changed, and the one presented removed all parking west of White Bear Avenue. Our understanding is that the vote was delayed until June 1 in order to inform residents of the change and allow comments. We just received the written notice on Wednesday afternoon (May 25). With the short time frame and the Memorial Day weekend holiday, we assume that most residents will not be able to respond or are unaware of the switch.

The open house did not adequately address neighborhood residents' serious concerns. For example:

Numerous claims about bicyclists' safety and about slowing down the traffic were made, but were not supported by data from any statistically valid studies of comparable situations. Several of the claims were contrary to people's experience, which further undermined credibility.

Data regarding the number of parking spaces were misused. One frequently repeated claim was that there would be plenty of on-street parking spaces east of White Bear Avenue so on-street parking is not needed west of White Bear Avenue. This does not make any sense. - Regardless of their age, people are not going to park east of White Bear Avenue and walk long distances to a destination west of White Bear Avenue.

The planners also emphasized that the numbers of parked vehicles observed west of White Bear Avenue during their two counts was small and, therefore, in their opinion, on-street parking is not needed there. Even though the parking spaces are not used continuously, having none available would be a hardship for residents of all ages in that area. On-street parking serves several critical functions and is expected by homebuyers in a residential neighborhood of this type. A related issue involves yard maintenance and construction trades. In some cases, the equipment has to be parked on the street. When asked about this, the organizers said that would not be allowed. This seems to favor transient residents who do not care if their properties get run down versus conscientious homeowners who want to maintain or improve their properties.

Preserving on-street parking along one side of the entire length of Upper Afton between Burns and McKnight is a compromise that would respect the homeowners of all ages who live here, while still allowing for bike lanes.

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