



The Arc Minnesota
800 Transfer Road, Suite 7A
Saint Paul, MN 55114-1414

T 651-523-0823 1-800-582-5256
F 651-523-0829
www.arcmn.org

Achieve with us.

September 25, 2017

Dear St. Paul City Councilmembers and City Staff:

My name is Ellen Baudler, and I am the Director of Housing Access for The Arc Minnesota. Since 2009, The Arc Minnesota has had a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to assist people with disabilities in finding and moving to new, independent housing—a place of their own. We have assisted more than 1,900 people with disabilities since the beginning of the grant.

It is with the people we serve in mind that I write to you regarding the Ford Plant site.

- **The Ford Plant site plan does not provide housing that would be affordable for the people with disabilities we serve.**

The proposed housing for the Ford Plant site includes some housing affordable to persons making 50% and 60% of the area median income (AMI). Housing at this level of affordability is out of reach for the majority of people with disabilities. The plan should include housing affordable to persons at 30% of the area median income.

- **The people with disabilities that The Arc Minnesota assists find it extremely difficult to find housing they can afford.**

The dramatic changes in the metro housing market include significant rent increases and a declining vacancy rate. This has created a scarcity of housing affordable to extremely low income renters, such as those we assist.

- **People with disabilities, like all other Minnesotans, need and deserve safe and affordable housing so that they can live stable lives and be included in their communities.**

The City defends the absence of any Ford Plant site housing affordable at 30% of the AMI, reasoning that Ward 3 is home to 700 publicly-assisted low income and public housing rental units, of which approximately 500 are affordable to households at or below 30% of AMI. (See staff memo, Affordable Housing Strategy: Ford Site Planning, p. 2.)

While accurate, almost all of the subsidized affordable housing in Ward 3 is along West 7th Street. The only subsidized housing in the Highland Park area is a senior high rise apartment building. (See Housing Justice Center letter dated September 20, 2017.)

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For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Housing for low income and people with disabilities should be scattered within neighborhoods and communities, and should reflect the natural proportion of people with disabilities in the general population. The Highland Park neighborhood is pedestrian-friendly, has easy access to necessary commercial enterprises, is near mass transit, and has community centers -- all necessary for people with disabilities to be able to live independently and be included in their community.

We would hope that people with disabilities are welcomed in Highland Park. Public policies, including the Ford Plant site plan that the St. Paul City Council is considering, should provide affordable, independent housing options for all Minnesotans, including people with disabilities.

The Arc Minnesota asks that you add to the Ford Site plan 10% of units affordable at 30% of AMI.

Yours truly,

Ellen J. Baudler
Director of Housing Access
The Arc Minnesota
800 Transfer Rd.
Suite 7A
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-604-8044
ellenb@arcmn.org