March 5, 2018
To: St. Paul City Council Members Henningson, Thao, Noecker, Tolbert, Brendmoen, Bostrom and Prince
Dear Council Member:

On Wednesday, March 7th the City Council will be asked to vote on the proposed sale of public land in Saint Anthony Park. As a resident of the Park and a member of its Land Use Committee, I urge you to vote “no” on this sale.

This land was originally donated to the city by community-minded residents in the early 1900’s, enabling the Saint Anthony Park Carnegie Library to be built. A few years ago the library’s neighbor to the southeast claimed the land. It has been determined by the city that it owns the disputed property.

Now a sale to the neighbor of most of that property is proposed. The city’s representatives have failed to include our community in the process that led to the decision to sell this public land. When our locally elected Community Council learned of the possibility of the sale in 2016, by happenstance, not because the city felt a need to reach out for input, our Community Council asked that a neighborly compromise be reached. This request was ignored. Recently, when the city recommended the sale of almost 90% of the land under discussion, the Community Council asked once more for an equitable compromise and again this request was rejected.

One wonders why we have local governing bodies if the city’s representatives do not seek or respect interaction with them. Our community works hard to create and maintain public green space. It has clearly expressed its interest in this space, yet our interests are being ignored in the final decision.The exclusion of input from our Community Council makes the decision to sell off the library land invalid.

The library’s representatives have stated the land in question is not needed because there are no plans for expansion in the future.This seems to be a rather narrow view of the land’s use as solely a potential building site rather than as an inviting and inclusive public green space that extends the value of the library itself. Furthermore, this historic public library and its surrounding greenery are part of our business center, adding to the perceived charm of Saint Anthony Park that draws visitors to shop and eat here, benefiting local merchants and restaurants.

St. Paul has acquired land from the developers of the old Weyerhaeuser site to create a public park. Yet here in our neighborhood the city recommends selling, for no compelling reason and for not much money, park-like land it already owns.

I would prefer that none of this public green space be sold. That said, I and others interested in preserving public use of this land are open to re-negotiating the matter to achieve an equitable and reasonable compromise, with negotiations that, this time, consider and include the recommendations of representatives of our community.

Sincerely yours,
Carol Herman
2195 Hendon Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

From: Mary Boyd-Brent [mailto:maryboydbrent@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 6:37 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Disputed land next to St Anthony Park Library

As someone else put it so well, I, too, "believe that city-owned public green space should not be turned over to adjacent land-owners because of a misunderstanding that preceded their ownership." In a recent 10-year survey conducted by the SAPCC, preservation of historic land use emerged as very important to the residents of SAP and I strongly urge the city to take this into serious consideration.

While the Pollinator Garden now on the city's land is relatively new given that it had been library lawn for at least a century, it was nevertheless planted to beautify and educate on a parcel of land having commonly been understood until now to be, like the library itself, truly public.

The spirit and appearance of the library and its surrounding location would be greatly diminished by the loss of the garden and even moreso by the wall the prospective purchasers apparently intend to build.

While librarians may be able to speak about a lack of expansion plans for the building itself or current use by the city at large, the St Anthony Park Public Library, as a cherished centerpiece of the community, is currently very much in community use that's greatly appreciated. And there are plans for benches to draw the community into that public green space of which the non-residential stretch of Como from the library to Doswell has lost so much in the last decades.

While we can't replace what's gone, as many residents apparently expressed a desire to do in the Council's 10-year survey, I urge you to preserve what we have going forward.

Thank you,
Mary Boyd-Brent
2233 Scudder St.
St Anthony Park

From: Alice Duggan [mailto:comeforteamn@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 1:45 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Query March 7

Wednesday February 27

Dear Samantha,
I write to ask you if we could, might, postpone the council vote
on March 7, re the sale of library property to Mr and Mrs. Foss.
I hope that we might come to a compromise before the vote.

I hope that we can have a three foot pathway (I am one of the weekly weeders), givng us safe access as we haul things in and out, as library staff bring children into the garden, as neighbors come for a view of it.

I think we are not so far apart as it might appear.
Sincerely,
Alice Duggan

Dear Council Member Henningson,

I am attaching two documents that I have prepared that show the homeowners at 2239 Como (adjacent to the St. Anthony Park library) have NOT been paying for land they have not had use of over the years, and have been underpaying if they actually own as much land as they assert they do.

Ramsey County currently assesses the Fosses for.23 acres, and at that acreage the Fosses are paying less per square foot than their neighbors, though the county has been increasing the Fosses' land assessment each year significantly faster than the neighbors. If they have .23 acres, as of 2017 they are close to comparable with 2235 Como, still a $1/sq ft LESS than the house at 2229 Como.

The Ramsey County .23 acres is based on faulty dimensions on the lot - as acknowledged this morning by David Wilford in the property tax mapping department. County records say the lot is 57' wide and 175' long, when it is only 143' feet long.

If you try three scenarios on the lot size, you come to different outcomes, which are shown in the attached Excel pdf:

1. If you use the 2015 Sunde survey (the line the city asserts is the actual property line), the Fosses have only .187 acres and HAVE been overpaying, and especially since the county started jacking their assessment up more than the neighbors. (They weren't overpaying much in 2014.)

2. If you use the 1998 Parker line (the line the Fosses advocate), they have .273 acres and have been underpaying even more than the county currently undercharges them on .23 acres.

3. If you use the edge of their new retaining wall (69.5' width on the Como side of the lot = original 57' + 12.5' added when they built the wall), and go straight back to the alley parallel to the house, they have .228 acres, just about the .23 acres the county says they have, and are underpaying about the same as the have been in reality.

That line - from the edge of the retaining wall to the alley parallel to the house (it's about 12' from the house) - is called the Half Way line in these documents (since it comes close to splitting the difference between the two surveys), and it turns out it is approximately the same square footage as what the Fosses have been assessed at as well, even if the county's dimensions are completely wrong.

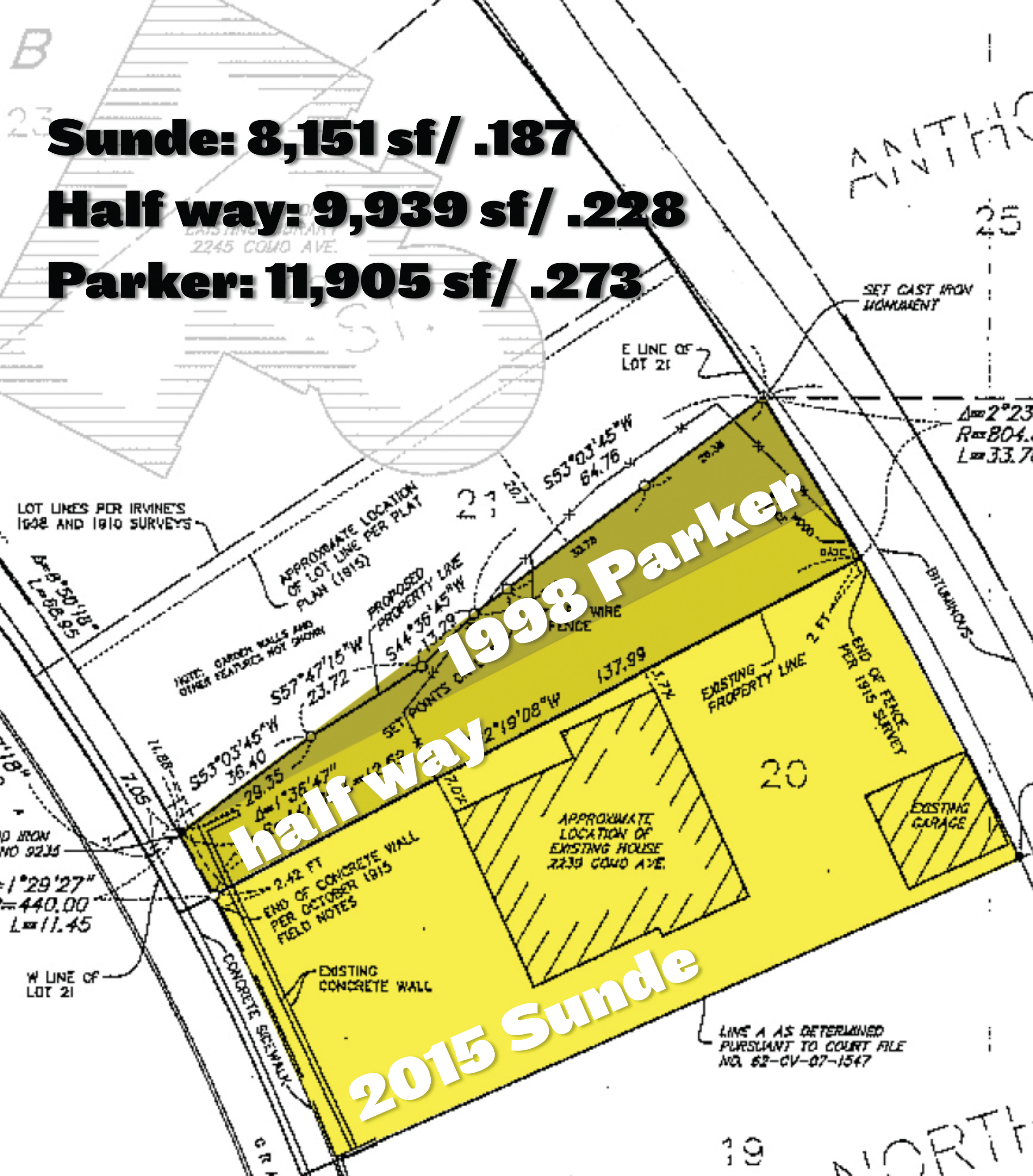
I know this issue of whether or not the 2239 homeowners past and present have paid property taxes on the land in question is not an issue the city considered in making its decision - however, I and others want to make it clear that the county is assessing the 2239 property incorrectly one way or another. And also to show for the public record that the 2239 homeowners past and present have not been taxed on land they didn't have use of.

Because these documents have been sent to Council Member Prince at her request, I wanted to be sure you also have them.

--
Pat Thompson

Land-only value assessments, 2014 - 2017											
Property taxes are based on these amounts											
43,560 sq ft = 1 acre											
	2014			**2015**			**2016**			**2017**	
All data through row 17 comes from Ramsey County	**Total**	**Per sq ft**		**Total**	**Per sq ft**		**Total**	**Per sq ft**		**Total**	**Per sq ft**
property tax summaries, publicly available											
2239 Como Ave, .23 acres, 10,019 sq ft	$120,300.00	$12.00		$131,700.00	$13.15		$150,400.00	$15.01		$150,400.00	$15.01
57x175'											
2235 Como Ave. .24 acres, 10454 sq ft	$136,000.00	$13.01		$138,100.00	$13.21		159900	15.29		$159,900.00	$15.29
75x142'											
2229 Como Ave. .25 acres, 10,890 sq ft	$151,700.00	$13.93		$151,700.00	$13.93		$174,600.00	$16.03		$174,600.00	$16.03
73x150'											
Ramsey Count says the lot is .23 acres based on 57 x 175 dimensions.											
This is an ERROR. The lot is only 143 feet deep, according to the											
Ramsey County mapping office, David Wilford, 651-266-2182											
2239 Como Ave: lot size scenarios vs. assessed $ amounts											
57x143' (2015 Sunde survey, historically supported bounda	$120,300.00	$14.76		$131,700.00	$16.16		$150,400.00	$18.45		$150,400.00	$18.45
8151 sq ft, .187 acres											
In this scenario, Ramsey County has been											
overassessing the Fosses compared with neighbors											
69.5' front, 97' back, x 143' 1998 (Parker survey)	$120,300.00	$10.10		$131,700.00	$11.06		$150,400.00	$12.63		$150,400.00	$12.63
11905 sq ft, .273 acres											
This is the property line the Fosses assert. They underpay											
extremely compared with neighbors in this scenario.											
69.5x143' - (69.5 = 57 + 12.5') ~ halfway between surveys	$120,300.00	$12.10		$131,700.00	$13.25		$150,400.00	$15.13		$150,400.00	$15.13
9939 sq ft, .228 acres											
This is a similar acreage to the current assessment. They underpay											
compared with neighbors, but are close to comparable with											
neighbors at 2235 Como.											

Sunde: 8,151 sf/ .187

Half way: 9,939 sf/ .228

Parker: 11,905 sf/ .273