

From: Monica M [<mailto:msbertrecords@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, July 9, 2018 5:39 AM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: brandon@unionparkdc.org; amy@unionparkdc.org
Subject: Letter of opposition to granting a license for Pawn America

Councilmember Henningson,

I am generally supportive of businesses moving into my neighborhood, including unpopular choices. For example, I have been supportive of businesses like Love Doctor, bars and vaping shops.

However, I do not believe that Pawn America offers any positive economic or social benefits for the neighborhood.

It may be true that at one time, some residents of this neighborhood relied on a predatory business like Pawn America out of desperation for loans and to sell their possessions to pay other bills. However, as a testament to the success of technology like the Internet, people can now personally sell their possessions on places like Craigslist or Facebook and receive full price and not be charged all sorts of fees. Residents have also successfully used community churches, neighborhood Facebook pages and GoFundMe type sites to obtain financial assistance to pay bills in times of need. Many employers also offer advances on paychecks in emergency situations, allowing people a better, safer option than using a pawn shop for loans. There are a growing number of banks that offer safer, more affordable options to people with bad credit or no credit. Pawn America originally left due to bankruptcy, likely related to people finding better, more efficient and effective ways to receive money. As the city works towards policies like increased wages, increased housing options, and increased job opportunities that truly improve the economic situation of people in this neighborhood, the need for predatory businesses like Pawn America will continue to decrease. There is already another Pawn Shop about 4 blocks and 2 check cashing places within 1.5 miles of this proposed Pawn America site should someone need this service. Allowing a license for Pawn America at this time will only take valuable, prime real estate that could be used for a higher and better purpose that fits with the city's comprehensive plan and positively supports the current and future residents.

Research indicates that pawn shops do like to enter into speculative real estate markets. Thus, allowing Pawn America a license to operate in this area at this time will take away potential for a more positive business and/or residential development at this corner.

Furthermore, this neighborhood is currently undergoing growth through significant public and private investment. Private investors and developers like Wellington Management, RK Midway, and Dr McGuire are relying on a city partnership that supports growth and improvement opportunities for the neighborhood. The new soccer stadium, the planned Wellington development- these are catalysts for further investment in our neighborhood that support the residents that are already here and signal to future residents that our neighborhood is a safe and vital place to be. While a pawn shop may have had its benefits in the past, it no longer signals a growing, healthy community. Giving Pawn America a license to return will likely have a negative impact on future development in this prime location. I am positive that through the current development that is planned in the area surrounding the soccer stadium, an investor will come forward for the location that Pawn America is seeking to return to- an investor that will seek out a higher land use for the property and will more than likely have a positive relationship with the surrounding community.

With consideration to the impact of the neighborhood and its residents, I urge you to deny a license to Pawn America at this time.

Sincerely,
Monica Rasmussen
Merriam Park resident- in the same grid as the proposed Pawn America site
409 Roy St N
cc: UPDC Executive Director and Land Use Chair