



# CITY OF SAINT PAUL

*Melvin Carter, Mayor*

## HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

*Maria Mitchell, Chair*

[mariasmitchell@yahoo.com](mailto:mariasmitchell@yahoo.com)

651-307-9736

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Erika Sanders

Brynn Smith

Christopher Smith

**DATE:** March 28, 2019

**TO:** City Council Members:

Amy Brendmoen, Council President and Ward 5

Dai Thao, Ward 1

Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2

Chris Tolbert, Ward 3

Mitra Jalali Nelson, Ward 4

Kassim Busuri, Ward 6

Jane Prince, Ward 7

**FROM:** HREEO Commission

**SUBJECT:** Ryan Companies Proposed Amendments to the Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan

Dear Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

The Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission is deeply committed to the promotion of equal opportunity for all. The ability of all Saint Paul residents to have access to equal opportunities is, in part, dependent on the creation of racially and economically integrated living patterns in our city. It is with this perspective that we are writing to you with concerns about proposed amendments to the Ford Site Master Plan.

Ryan Companies (Ryan) has proposed a change to the current Master Plan, which would allow single family homes (SFH) to be built in the F1 district of the Ford Site. Ryan has also proposed downzoning Lot 11 of the Ford Site from F2 to F1 to exclude medium-density housing from this riverfront lot. The HREEO Commission strongly opposes both amendments as not being in the spirit of Chapter 183 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code as well as the Housing Variety Key Principle to Guide Ford Site Redevelopment. We ask that you vote against the proposed amendments that would allow for Single Family Homes to be developed on the Ford Site.

St. Paul, Minn. Code § 183.01 Declaration of Policy states:

“The public policy of Saint Paul is to foster equal opportunity for all to obtain employment, education, real property, public accommodations, public services, contract and franchise without regard to their race, creed, religion, sex, sexual or affectional orientation, color, national origin, ancestry, familial status, age, disability, marital status or status with regard to public assistance, and strictly in accord with their individual merits as human beings.”

The development of the Ford Site presents an exceptional opportunity in the city to bring the availability of riverfront property to residents who would be otherwise priced out of the ability to afford a traditional single family home along the river. Dedicating the new development to multi-family homes allows for more equitable access to this unique asset of our city, “while keeping within the current design aesthetic” as noted by city staff – that the multi-family homes would look like the large SFH that are currently in place along the river.

One of the guiding principles for the Ford Site Master Plan is to present the city with a “[r]ange of housing types and affordability that expand choices in the area and in the city.” Simply put, allowing SFH along the river goes against that principle by creating more of the same and without embracing the motto of the project – *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community*. The Metropolitan Council conducted a residential development study<sup>1</sup> in 2018 that shows that residential construction is not increasing quickly enough to meet household growth and that multifamily units have outpaced SFH in constructed units. This follows the long-term expectations of the Metropolitan Council - multifamily construction is not only poised for continued growth, it helps to meet the demand for the “missing middle” option for residents.

The Mississippi River is Saint Paul’s greatest natural asset, but for too long we have segregated our community by only allowing the wealthiest among us to live on riverfront property in Highland Park. We urge you to look at the Ford Site as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reverse that troubling trend and to instead create a best-in-class

model of urban redevelopment. This includes ensuring equitable and cutting edge development ideas rather than the traditional approaches which have resulted in the current disparities and shortage of affordable housing. We look forward to your vote to reject the amendments to add single family homes to this site.

Thank you,

Commissioners of the Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission

Damon Drake	Ward 1
Charles Ellis	Ward 1
Christopher Smith	Ward 2
Erin Hayes	Ward 2
Tyler Blackmon	Ward 2
Brynn Smith	Ward 3
Emily Peterson	Ward 3
Autumn Amadou-Blegen	Ward 4
Erika Sanders	Ward 4
Marquita Cammon	Ward 4
Babatope Adedayo	Ward 5
Jennifer Lee	Ward 5
Maria Mitchell	Ward 5
Nieeta Presley	Ward 7
Jim Frisco	At-Large
Catherine Dahlberg	At-Large
Devon Gilchrist	At-Large
Leila Paye-Baker	At-Large

Reference:

Metropolitan Council Residential Development Study: <https://metro council.org/Council-Meetings/Committees/Community-Development-Committee/2018/June-4,-2018/info-item-ppt.aspx>