

Hello, my name is Jim Winterer and for 25 years I have lived three houses from the Ford site at 1032 Bowdoin Street.

I am here to comment on the goal of integrating the Ford site with the surrounding community.

To quote from the Ford plan's website, it is supposed to be a "well-designed urban neighborhood that complements and integrates into the Highland Park area and broader community."

And another quote: "This site will be woven into the existing community."

This is a real challenge when you have density levels for the Ford site that will accommodate the entire population of International Falls with room left over for Grand Marais. Or another example: all of Two Harbors with room left for Ely.

On the west side of the site, for much of the way from Ford Parkway to the Hidden Falls curve, the city wants to see a solid row of multi-unit residential buildings up to 48 feet high. Over on the east side of the Ford site, where there currently is no commercial activity, the city wants to replace the three ball fields with a Gateway District that will be ... quote ... "the economic heart of the Ford redevelopment site." Zoning would allow buildings 65 feet high for a wide range of business, office, retail and service establishments.

So on both the east and west sides, we have pretty much the polar opposite of weaving the site into the existing community. We raised our concerns about that level of development at meetings the Ryan Companies held in our neighborhood.

And they listened. Ryan came up with a plan to soften the edges of the site. Along the river, they would like to replace that wall of multi-unit buildings with single-family homes. And on the east side, instead of six-story commercial buildings, they would save two of the ball fields and are considering, instead, a senior-care home and a community garden. [And while no one can say what's in store for the railroad property, one of the Ryan executives told me they would like to see the switchyard eventually become parkland.]

Ryan's plan does weave the development into the existing community. They have won over many of the Highland residents who once were opposed to the city plan, including me. Please vote to approve all the amendments requested by the Ryan Companies. Thanks.

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