District 1 Community Council

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December 11, 2019

Matthew Graybar
Board of Zoning Appeals Administrator
15 Kellogg Blvd W
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Mr. Graybar:

The Land Use Committee of the District 1 Community Council has taken notice of two variance applications heard by the Board of Zoning Appeals in the past three months for front yard residential parking pads. We are concerned that this is becoming a trend which we find highly undesirable.

We oppose, in principle, parking pads that are placed in the front yard and/or that are wider than the zoning code allows for driveways. These parking pads increase impervious surfaces which negatively impacts stormwater quality in our district. District 1 is located along over four miles of riverfront and already experiences the effects of upstream pollution more than anywhere else in Saint Paul. Protection of our water resources is so important to our residents that our Community Plan includes a policy (ENV 1) to "encourage best practices in stormwater management at public facilities and on private property." These parking pads do not advance that policy.

In addition to the environmental health aspects, we also strongly support a transition to a greater proportion of trips travelled by modes other than single-occupant vehicles. The proliferation of car-specific infrastructure on private property that is already proscribed by zoning code harms efforts to shift transportation modes, and thus harms efforts to combat our current climate crisis.

We also take note that both of these variances were after-the-fact for parking pads installed without proper permits and zoning approval. We request better education of paving contractors so that these zoning issues are considered prior to construction. We also request more information be made available on the City's website so property owners can better inform themselves to hold their contractors to proper conformance to the zoning code.

Finally, we strongly encourage all applicants for these types of variances to contact District 1 staff prior to submitting an application. There are circumstances in which we may find a compelling reason to support such an application due to practical difficulties facing the applicant, but without knowledge of those specific circumstances, our default position will be to submit a letter in opposition to these applications. Additionally, in a district like ours, the patterns of residential use are more dynamic and changing than elsewhere in the city, and we understand that there are often multi-generational families with greater numbers of unrelated or more

distantly-related adults that often results in more vehicles than a more historically traditional nuclear family. These factors also can influence our position on applications when we are made aware of them.

We ask that you share our concerns with the members of the Board of Zoning Appeals and that our position is considered in future decisions regarding parking pads in District 1.

Sincerely,

Paul Sawyer
Chair, District 1 Land Use Committee
On behalf of the Board of Directors