

To: St. Paul City Council
From: Brian Wenger
Re: RM Zoning Study
Date: September 1, 2020

Background

In my submission to the Planning Commission on May 3, 2020, I stated that it was essential for the parking study and the RM study be done at the same time. Specifically, I wrote: "I wish to note the import of addressing parking and zoning at the same time. If we do not look at parking at the same time, then we are not able to see if the proposed zoning revisions are practical, and even feasible."

The response, the RM Report, on page 45, provides as follows:

Issue: Complete the Parking Zoning Study prior to this study, or ensure that parking requirements for RM districts will remain unchanged.

Response: The Parking Zoning Study will analyze impacts to all parts of the city, including those zoned RM. The most effective way to address parking issues is through parking regulations, rather than suppressing density in order to suppress parking demand.

Discussion

We all are in support of more density. And, density creates more parking.

Here is the simple example. Assume that the new RM zoning regulations are adopted. On an 80-foot wide lot in St. Paul, the onsite parking required is 40 parking spots. See attached, cell N60.¹ However, the possible parking on that lot with the permitted density is only 18 parking spots. See attached, cell X62. So, the remaining 22 cars would need to park on the street. A street can only accommodate 26 cars. As a result, just one property on the block can take up almost all of the parking.

Our zoning should not permit this kind of intense use which is to the detriment of the neighbors, both businesses and residences.

Conclusion

The above example, which is very plausible under the new RM zoning, evidences that the best zoning is accomplished only through considering parking and RM zoning together. To do otherwise will create distortions referenced above. As a City, we do not want to implement new zoning that does not consider the material and unintended adverse effects of that zoning.

¹ I have reviewed the details and reasonableness of the attached spreadsheet with Bill Dermody.