

Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County

St. Paul City Council hearing of zoning appeal, 1465 Davern St.

June 3, 2015

President Stark, Members of the City Council,

I'm Shirley Erstad, a resident of St. Paul and Executive Director of Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County, a non-profit organization celebrating its 30th anniversary.

While we are excited about that milestone and happy to share the good news with everybody, why is it important in this context? 30 years ago, a development was proposed for Crosby Farm Regional Park, prompting the formation of Friends of the Parks. Imagine for a moment, if you will, being in a canoe or kayak, aboard the Jonathan Padelford, or perhaps in the near future, on a Viking River Cruise, but instead of drifting past Crosby Farm Regional Park, you would be going past Crosby Condominiums. Having that as a built environment would substantially alter the experience of being on the river today.

In the same way, granting the variance before you, allowing a 73.5' structure in an area with a zoning designation of 40' would substantially alter the character of that area of the river corridor. In order to grant the variance, the development must be in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and it is not. A building of that scope would impact the scenic views from multiple vantage points, including Historic Fort Snelling. The Mississippi River Corridor Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Shepard-Davern Area Plan, passed by this body just four months ago, state that views from Fort Snelling and other public scenic overlooks must be considered.

Bear in mind, if this variance is granted, it will invariably set precedent for the projects that will be proposed in the future.

The Founders of Friends of the Parks banded together 30 years ago because they believed in the importance of preserving the integrity of natural areas not just for them, not just for us, but for those that come after us. Together, my predecessors, and yours, collectively recognized the need to protect the Mississippi River Corridor for the precious resource it is, including the scenic and natural views.

We ask that you embrace their vision and deny the height variance.

Thank you.