

Honorable Mayor Chris Coleman & members of the St. Paul City Council
310 City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd W.
St. Paul, MN 55102

Friday, September 22, 2017

Dear Mayor Coleman and City Council Members,

On behalf of numerous organizations and community members who believe that a sustainable community is one that finds strength in the changes that come with time, we urge you to support the Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan. As neighbors invested in the future livability and sustainability of our city, we support the Ford Plan because:

The Ford Site represents an opportunity for St. Paul to be a national and global leader in environmentally sustainable neighborhood planning. The plan provides responsible protection of natural resources along the riverfront, additional green space, and the opportunity to explore alternative forms of energy. Good land use planning, which includes density and transit-oriented development, is necessary for our city and state to do our part to address climate change. By integrating the site with our transit system, community members can choose to live in the city with minimal reliance on automobile travel. By designing buildings that are energy efficient with renewable sources, residents will benefit from improved air quality and low energy bills, and communities can attract economic growth by supporting adding housing options on a near net-zero energy site.

Our growing city requires development that integrates transit, bicycling, and walking projects that help people get to where they need to go affordably and in healthy, sustainable ways. Beyond reduced pollution, transit-oriented development saves money, builds upon existing corridors, and will allow residents, employees, and visitors multiple modes for traveling to and from Highland. The extension of the existing street grid pattern will allow traffic to flow more smoothly through the entire neighborhood, and will connect existing neighborhoods to the river. As St. Paul continues to grow, transit and traffic will continue to be critical issues, but they needn't prevent the City from moving forward with the Ford Plan in its current form.

The Ford Plan deserves the City Council's support because it reflects St. Paul's changing housing needs, while also expanding fair and affordable housing opportunities. Increasing and preserving access to affordable housing-especially in areas where few affordable options exist-is central to jobs and growing local economies. St. Paul's aging housing stock requires innovative and proactive strategies to create the additional housing units needed to provide choices for current residents, as well as to support continued growth. We support a housing strategy with a range of affordable rental and homeownership options, including housing for seniors hoping to downsize, and young people and families facing challenging conditions in employment and housing markets.

The ways in which people move in and out of neighborhoods are not accidental-residential patterns reflect segregation and differing access to opportunity by race and ethnicity. If the City is truly committed to furthering fair housing, housing choice, and economic opportunity, community development investments must be made through a lens of fair housing and racial equality. Investment in construction of new affordable housing should prioritize expanding affordability within areas where there are currently fewer affordable options, such as Highland. The City has a responsibility to guide land use and community investments to meet the needs of our changing demographics, while also working to overcome historical discriminatory housing practices that have limited housing opportunities for communities of color.

The proposed density, environmental features, and transit-oriented development all make the Ford Site an exciting opportunity that will attract additional residents and businesses to revitalize St. Paul's tax base through job creation and increased property tax revenues. An accessible, inclusive, net-zero energy, forward-looking development is one of the best ways St. Paul can ensure prosperity for future generations. Our City's transit, environmental, and housing needs are urgent-it is time to move forward with the Ford Plan so that we can face these challenges head-on, rather than continuing to study and discuss proposals. We appreciate the time and energy the City has invested in planning for this site, and urge you to move forward with the Ford Site Zoning and Public Realm Master Plan. Thank you for your consideration and service to St. Paul.

Sincerely,

