From: Douglas Scofield
Sent: Sunday, June 5, 2016 2:10 PM
To: jon.commers@metc.state.mn.us
Subject: Soccer Stadium

The site should have a bus transit station. Also, it should have some space for a park (kid zone) and concert pavilion. Of course, affordable fast food – American, Mexican, & Asian. A dollar store and Walmart Store, as we have already given the Target corporation so much publicity in Minnesota. A couple of fitness centers on site would be nice too, contingent upon the corporation (Lifetime Fitness & LA Fitness) giving Saint Paul Resident affordable daily passes. There should be a red cross station there and Regions urgent care there too. Perhaps, a open parking lot for pregame party. As well as a couple affordable parking garages. It will need a onsite police station. Affordable Multi-family housing on site should have a law which states that it has to be at least 51% homeowners living there, thus it will not turn into all rental. Lastly, the stadium should be open to public games too (High school, college, and elite leagues).

Saint Paul Planning Commission Comment Form

You may use this form to submit written testimony to the Saint Paul Planning Commission on the following project:

Minnesota United MLS Stadium Site Plan, Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan, or clarification Zoning Amendment

The Saint Paul Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for this project on:
Friday June 10, 8:30 am
Room 40 of City Hall, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul

Written testimony must be **received by**:
4:30 pm on Monday June 13, 2016

Your name and address are required for your comments to be considered part of the public record.

Once completed, you may place this form in the provided comment box, or mail it to:
Kady Dadlez, Department of Planning and Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Comments can also be submitted by email to: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Name: Don Riabek

Address: 296 N. Aldine St. Paul MN

Comments: ① Given the current proposed Stadium plan removes 1/2 the current shopping Center, how does that fit into the Shopping Center redesign?

Given the validity of the #1 above since the city doesn't own some of the land how will the property be obtained?

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Saint Paul, MN 55102

Comments can also be submitted by email to: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Name: Martha Rhode

Address: 630 Ashland Ave

Comments: I think that any office buildings should be scaled to the modest sizes that currently exist. I don't think skyscraper sized office buildings will (1) be appropriate and (2) get filled up

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Name: Tim Faust

Address: 2244 Dayton Avenue

Comments: I believe this project represents a tremendous opportunity for the city of Saint Paul to revitalize its Midway area and generate more revenue for the City coffers. I support moving forward with this project.
The city and the neighborhood will be well served by a robust community engagement process to mitigate development impacts on the neighborhood and to ensure that the project serves the community as it evolves to its ultimate end state.

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1400 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Comments can also be submitted by email to: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Name: _____

Address: _____

Comments: Has the city done a health impact assessment? If not, please do it. This area and neighborhood deserves that consideration.

Why is there no current plan to use solar energy? Please address in your communication. Could the stadium + business use it?

Will the stadium offer healthy food options?

How will the loss of the grocery store ("Rainbow") impact the neighborhood(s)

Thank you.

From: Mim Cheng <mimcheng@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2016 12:44 PM
To: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Mim Cheng; nou cheng
Subject: Midway stadium development lacking green space in planning documents

June 8, 2016

To the members of the St. Paul Planning Commission,

We are two sisters, Mee Cheng and Nou Cheng, who live on Charles Avenue near Pascal Street, roughly three blocks from the future Major League Soccer stadium, with a one-year-old child. Throughout the planning process, we fully and 100 percent supported the stadium and, more importantly in our eyes, the redevelopment of the Midway Shopping Center. All of that changed on Tuesday.

That's when we discovered a key pedestrian benefit had been removed from the opening day site plan. The revised plan no longer provides green space along University Avenue. Instead, McDonald's and Perkins would remain in place along the avenue. Both of these restaurants effectively maintain their backs to the light rail station and the street corridor, forcing pedestrians coming in off the sidewalk to play a game of chicken with drivers in the Perkins parking lot or, even worse, in the McDonald's drive-through lane.

Neither business was built with pedestrians like us in mind. And previous site plan proposals corrected that error by installing Midway Square, greenery that better connects the soccer stadium to University Avenue and the surrounding community. Now that the planning documents are due to the city, the green space is suddenly gone!

What a bait and switch. With the original site plan in mind, the city pledged $18.4 million to improve infrastructure on the southern end of the stadium development. Why isn't RK Midway living up to its commitment to do the same to the north?

Minnesota United and RK Midway will say that they are trying for a phased approach. If that's the case, when will this green space phase happen? The city has provided firm commitments for everything it's funding. The team and strip mall owner should do the same, and spell out and be held to firm deadlines. Until that happens, we cannot endorse the soccer stadium or the Snelling-Midway plan and encourage you as members of the Planning Commission to fulfill your duty and vote against it.

Sincerely,

Mee Cheng
Nou Cheng

From: Brian Mehrman <brianm@archetypesign.com>
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2016 10:15 AM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Signage

We are very interested in providing the signage for this project. If you should need samples or prototypes let me know and we would be happy to provide what you need. Thank you for your consideration.

Brian Mehrman
archetype
9635 Girard Ave. S | Minneapolis, MN | 55431
D 952 641 9631
O 952 641 9600
archetypesign.com

From: Machaga N Johns <bigbodyone2@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2016 2:10 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Suggestions for Stadium and surrounding area

Hi,

My name is Machaga Johns. My mother lives in the midway area. My first suggestion is that the dome be covered due to noise pollution. My second is that the height of the buildings being built by the stadium are restricted to a certain height that doesn't completely kill the skyline.

Sincerely,

Machaga Johns

SAINT PAUL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

May 9, 2016

Saint Paul Planning Commission
c/o Kady Dadlez, Department of Planning and Economic Development
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

Re: Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Site Plan

Dear Planning Commission Members,

The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce would like to express its support of the Snelling-Midway redevelopment master plan, soccer stadium plan and zone clarification amendment to be discussed at the June 10 meeting. The Chamber has been in support of the soccer stadium since it was first discussed as a Saint Paul initiative and we are supportive of the surrounding infrastructure plans that will help reinvigorate the Snelling-Midway area.

The Chamber is excited for the potential of the Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Site Plan, especially the revision to the existing business area and additional green space. Transportation improvements in the surrounding area will also be beneficial to not only the Midway neighborhood but for all of Saint Paul. The Chamber believes that the addition of the soccer stadium to this location will help reinvigorate a neighborhood in Saint Paul that is primed for improvements. We are excited to see how the project can help the surrounding business community and the community as a whole.

Thank you for your work on the Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Site Plan and we are looking forward to changes to come with the site. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Matt Kramer
President
Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

401 North Robert Street - Suite 150 | Saint Paul, MN 55101
651.223.5000
www.SaintPaulChamber.com

(6)

From: Jake Rueter <jake.rueter@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2016 9:03 AM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Support for Minnesota United FC Stadium Plan | Comments for Planning Commission

Dear Ms. Dadlez,

I am writing to express my support for Minnesota United FC's stadium plan as a homeowner in the Hamline Midway neighborhood. The design of the stadium and attention to details like pedestrian-scale lighting, curbless streets, and bike lanes on Shields Avenue show that the developer is seriously considering how to make this site a better place for people. I am also encouraged to see that the developer will be working with the responsible parties to improve pedestrian safety at St. Anthony Avenue and Snelling Avenue.

I would ask that the Planning Commission support this proposed development and the required zoning changes.

Sincerely,

Jake Rueter
1347 Blair Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55104

UNION PARK DISTRICT COUNCIL
1602 Selby Avenue, Suite 10, Saint Paul, MN 55104
651.645.6887 | info@unionparkdc.org | www.unionparkdc.org
An Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Employer

June 2, 2016

Council President Russ Stark
Councilmember Dai Thao
Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Director, Planning and Economic Development
Saint Paul Planning Commissioners
Saint Paul City Hall
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council President Russ Stark, Councilmember Dai Thao, Mr. Sage-Martinson and Planning Commissioners:

The Union Park District Council board passed the following resolution at its regular meeting on June 1, 2016:

The Union Park District Council endorsed its "Midway Center Community Vision Steering Team" report in December 2015. At that time, the Steering Team identified several key issues regarding the potential redevelopment of the Midway Center superblock that are important to the residents and businesses of Union Park.

In January, the City launched the Snelling-Midway Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide community input on the Midway Center Master Plan and MLS Stadium Site Plan. As the CAC nears the conclusion of its work, many of the key issues identified by the Steering Team remain outstanding and unaddressed. Critical details about how the redevelopment of the site will impact neighbors and businesses are not yet clear, as are opportunities for future public engagement.

Recognizing that significant redevelopment of the Midway Center site will create actual and perceived negative impacts, Union Park District Council is committed to working with the city on mitigation of these issues, and to engaging the public in the development of solutions. Union Park District Council believes the following issues, among others, still need to be addressed:

- Traffic flow to and from the site, and broader traffic issues created by the development
- Pedestrian safety in and around the site
- Bicycle access to and from the site
- Encouragement of public transit and other non-vehicular stadium access
- Noise and light impacts
- Crime and public safety impacts
- Construction mitigation plans

- Community access to the stadium during non-game times
- Development of a Community Benefits Agreement or similar benefit arrangement
- Transparency in Midway Center development plans
- Utilization of local and minority businesses and workforce in the development
- Support for current businesses in transition
- Evaluation of economic impacts of the development
- Plan for eventual Minnesota United departure

The Union Park District Council will therefore develop a Midway Center Redevelopment Task Force under the Committee on Land Use and Economic Development specifically to partner with the City of Saint Paul, RK Midway and Minnesota United. The Task Force will convene its first meeting before July 1 and will seek to:

1. Serve as a conduit for community engagement and partnership in the planning and construction of the Midway Center site.
2. Advocate for additional opportunities for neighbors to address specific issues identified above.
3. Seek equitable, positive solutions that strengthen the quality of life, business climate and livability of the neighborhood.

Cooperation from the City will be crucial in the efforts of this Task Force. We hope we can count on the City to support our work. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Julie Reiter

Julie Reiter, Executive Director
Union Park District Council

cc: Donna Drummond, Planning and Economic Development
Kady Dadlez, Planning and Economic Development

I have been following the soccer stadium closely since its proposal last year in the Midway area. Many residents are frustrated by the way the City has pushed through this proposal without any real empathy for the concerns of the people. Most questions presented are answered with burdensome and often unrealistic solutions. I have several questions/comments which I would like to present and hope for realistic expectations and answers.

First of all, I'd like to know why all other proposals prior to the one offered by MN United were rejected by Met Council and the City of St. Paul? For example, Home Depot. Once Met Council decided they were willing to sell or lease the Bus Barn site, why wasn't the area open to other proposals by open public notice?

How much land is the stadium going to occupy? If it is more the area of the Bus Barn site, is it going to be property tax exempt? Future expansion is anticipated.

How is tailgating going to be handled? MN United clearly states on its Facebook page and website that it encourages tailgating.

How is litter going to be handled? City of St. Paul cannot even get MN DOT to take care of its properties that are within the Midway Area. Garbage cans?

I thought there were limits on height of buildings. What is the height limit in Midway area? Renderings look like a small high-rise city looming over all other buildings.

If you want attendees to go to games by means other than cars, how are you enticing people to stay and frequent the bars and restaurants in the area when they need to go home by shuttle? Are shuttles running late to car lots?

Regardless of the City of St. Paul's hopes that attendees will go to games by means other than cars, I think it is more realistic to assume that attendees will drive and park in residential neighborhoods. I know that residents of an area have no more rights to a public parking space than anyone else; however, when a person is going home and wants to park his/her car, he/she should be able to do so within a reasonable distance from the residence. Also, residential parking by attendees will bring noise, litter, loitering, and crime, and we do have a right to live without these intrusions. So, if the City really is valuing our concerns about parking, then why not make a decision today to post signs and hand out free parking permits to residents. You have the power to do it. Why not make a favorable decision for the people?

When reaching out to businesses to see if they are willing to open up their lots for game day parking, what restrictions and rules will govern them? Several businesses in my residential neighborhood have large parking lots, will I have to put up with more traffic down my residential street?

I would like to see the statistics for the upcoming game at Target Field on June 25 to see the actual number of attendees and mode of transportation.

How much is the stadium really costing taxpayers? I know infrastructure was already anticipated regardless of site proposals; however, I doubt the considerations originally included rain gardens, fountains, green space as the proposal does today. Who will pay for and maintain these features, especially if located on private property?

Who pays for police directing traffic?

Finally, whatever mitigation is required for parking, noise, etc., I hope the City doesn't solve the problems by simply allowing MN United to continually apply for variances and approve them.

Thank you,

Danette Lincoln
1607 Carroll Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

From: Bernie Hesse [mailto:bhesse@ufcw1189.org]
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2016 10:13 AM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Soccer Stadium Impacts- comments due June 13, 2016

We are very concerned about the potential impact of re-development of the Snelling Bus Barn site and the resulting collateral damage to workers in the shopping center. The shopping center currently has 400 or so workers from an unofficial survey. My union represents the workers at Rainbow Foods and currently it has 55-65 workers. Many of the workers are long service folks and have been through store closures, bankruptcies, and compression in the industry. We are very concerned that if the store is closed and the existing space is swapped out for the stadium or greenspace that no grocery store will replace it- or that a national chain will move in and fight any attempt at workers organizing or even paying a living wage.

We want our concerns of job retention (for all shopping center workers) and we want to see a community benefits agreement in place in order for all to benefit from the development.

We believe the elimination of yet another grocery store in Saint Paul adds to the problem of fresh food access and affordable sources of food for all people. It is a public health issue. In Saint Paul the shortage of healthy food offerings continues to shrink. We would ask the developer, the soccer owners, and the City of Saint Paul commit to seeking out a replacement store and to facilitate a labor peace agreement.

A food desert will exist in the neighborhood when folks will have to travel longer than a mile for fresh, healthy food.

We are willing to work with all interested parties to resolve this issue and stress that development- good or bad has impact on many different groups.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernie Hesse, UFCW 1189
1602 Thomas Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55104

Capitol Region Watershed District
1410 Energy Park Drive, Suite 4 • Saint Paul, MN 55108
T: (651) 644-8888 • F: (651) 644-8894 • capitolregionwd.org

June 10, 2016

Chair Barbara A. Wencl
Saint Paul Planning Commission
1400 City Hall Annex
25 Fourth Street West
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Re: Comments on Snelling Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan and MN United FC Stadium Site Plan

Dear Chairperson Wencl:

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) strongly urges the Saint Paul Planning Commission to call for a comprehensive stormwater management approach and a major water feature in the Snelling Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan and MN United Soccer Stadium Site Plan. With the Snelling Midway site being located in the CRWD subwatershed with the most polluted runoff and having no stormwater treatment, CRWD sees its redevelopment as a unique and important opportunity to be innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective in managing stormwater runoff over its entire 35 acres. Moreover, the redevelopment project will help protect the water quality of the Mississippi River, which is impaired for sediment and nutrients, and can provide a very visible, water-centric public amenity for a highly diverse community.

First, CRWD would like to see the City of Saint Paul advance our expressed, common interest in moving away from stormwater management on a parcel by parcel basis and move towards a comprehensive, shared management model for stormwater by implementing it on the Snelling Midway redevelopment site. For the past five months, the City and CRWD have been working together to explore a comprehensive stormwater management approach for the Snelling Midway site that would treat stormwater runoff from all the parcels within the 35-acre site in a central location. Also known as shared, stacked green infrastructure, the intent of the approach is to provide a common, shared system that utilizes landscape features or natural processes to manage stormwater and provide other environmental, social and economic benefits. We believe this approach can be more cost-effective in terms of both construction and long-term operation and maintenance, reducing the quantity of construction materials and labor and the number of practices to inspect and maintain. Also, infrastructure functions can be stacked in a common space (i.e., stormwater and parks), which allows for more developable land, and buildable parcels that are not locally required to treat stormwater can be folded into a shared stormwater system.

The City and CRWD have presented to MN United FC and RK Midway a schematic design of a comprehensive stormwater management system that includes rainwater harvesting cisterns, tree trenches and rain gardens (enclosed). While the master plan is consistent with our vision of treating stormwater runoff of the 35-acre site in central location with green infrastructure practices, the stadium site plan falls short and proposes to provide treatment for only half the site in BMPs distributed across the anticipated 17-acre Phase I redevelopment area. CRWD acknowledges that the stadium site plan shows some commitment to innovations in stormwater management, including rainwater harvesting and use, however, the Stadium site plan should take further steps and incorporate a comprehensive stormwater management approach.

Second, CRWD would like a major, interactive water feature integrated into the site to help us achieve our organization's watershed management goal of "Bringing Water Back to Saint Paul" both literally and figuratively in the eyes and minds of the public. The nearest surface waterbody to the site, the Mississippi River, is over a mile and a half away. This lack of proximity to surface waterbody was identified in a previous CRWD study as a major community barrier to placing higher value on water and adopting water resource protection measures. Through a major water feature and other green infrastructure practices, we can capture the attention of a highly diverse, lower than average income audience and connect them to water resources and motivate them to become water stewards.

We also believe that a major, interactive water feature can help the City achieve its transit-oriented redevelopment vision for the site. It can be the centerpiece for improving neighborhood livability and creating a sense of place that is attractive, vibrant and engaging and draws people of all ages and demographics year-round to the site. Local examples of integrating constructed water features, both natural and formal in appearances, into park designs include Trout Brook Nature Sanctuary, Rice Park and Mears Park with the latter two serving as precedent park images in the master plan. Also metropolitan cities across the globe are rethinking how they value and treat stormwater and are finding innovative ways to integrate water systems and civic infrastructure. In both Sherbourne Commons in Toronto and Canal Park in Washington DC, stormwater is the primary organizing feature of the parks and provide the source water for interactive elements. Enclosed are park images from both cities.

The comprehensive stormwater management approach and a major water feature are the same planning principles that the City has already adopted for the master plan of the West Side Flats redevelopment site and is being considered in the master planning process for the Ford redevelopment site. Planning for these two major redevelopment sites envision rainwater as a resource and call for an integration of stormwater runoff via green infrastructure practices into the design ethic and landscape of these sites. Also the City is considering an urban park water feature or stream fed by stormwater runoff at each site that could serve as a focal point and attractive amenity for the local community at each of these redevelopment sites.

We are committed to continue working with the City, RK Midway and MN United FC on refining the design of a comprehensive management approach and resolving the barriers to its implementation. This is a pivotal moment to create a public-private partnership to collectively and cost-effectively manage a shared resource and provide a water-centric, interactive amenity that reconnects the community to their water resources.

Sincerely,

Mark Doneux

Mark Doneux
Administrator

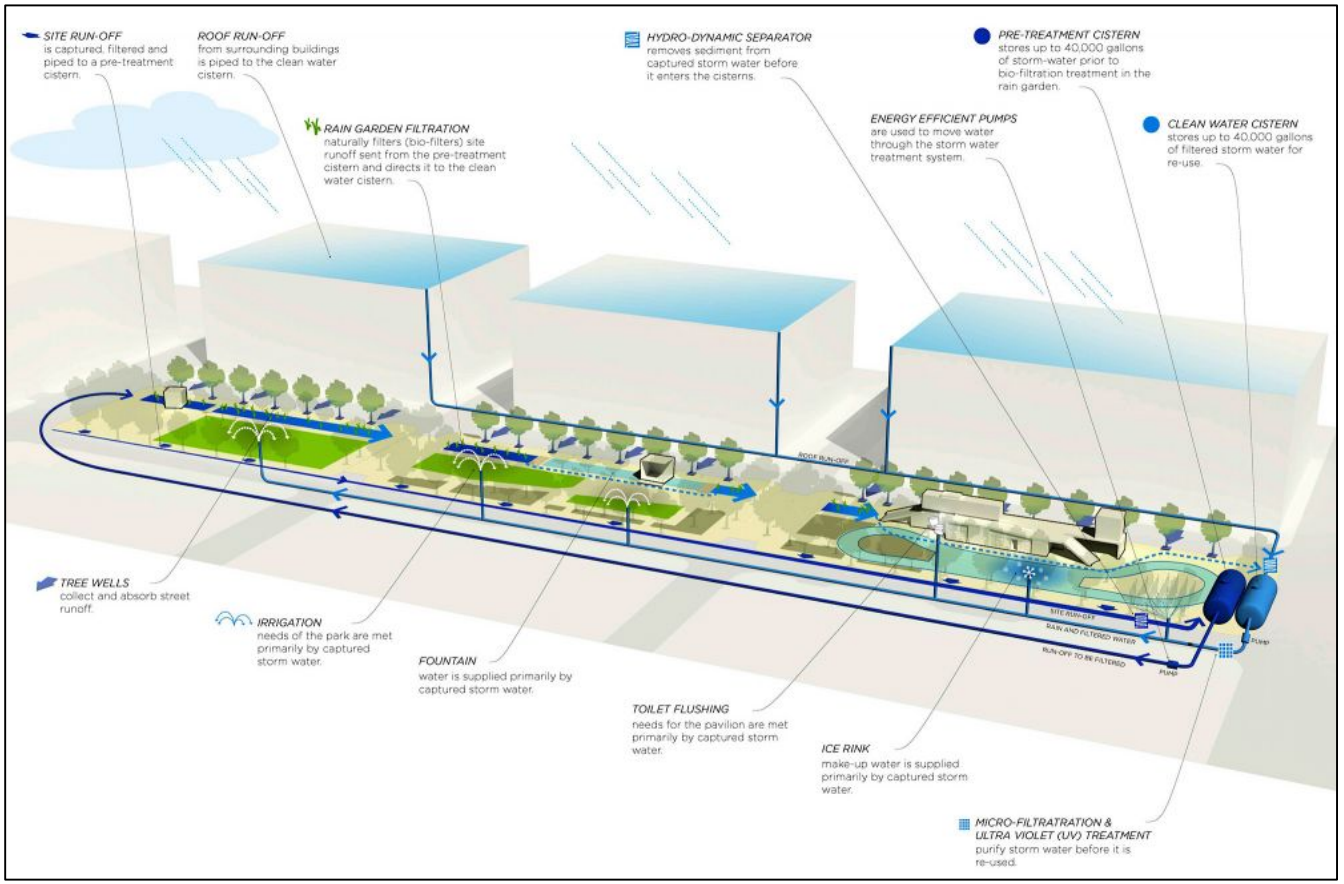
Enc. Saint Paul/CRWD Snelling Midway comprehensive stormwater management plan – draft
Precedent images of park stormwater features

cc: CRWD Board of Managers
Kristin Beckman, City of Saint Paul Deputy Mayor
Kady Dadlez, City of Saint Paul
Donna Drummond, City of Saint Paul
Jonathan Sage-Martinson, City of Saint Paul
Wes Saunders-Pearce, City of Saint Paul
Richard Birdoff, RK Midway
William McGuire, MN United FC
Nate Pearson, Tegra Group

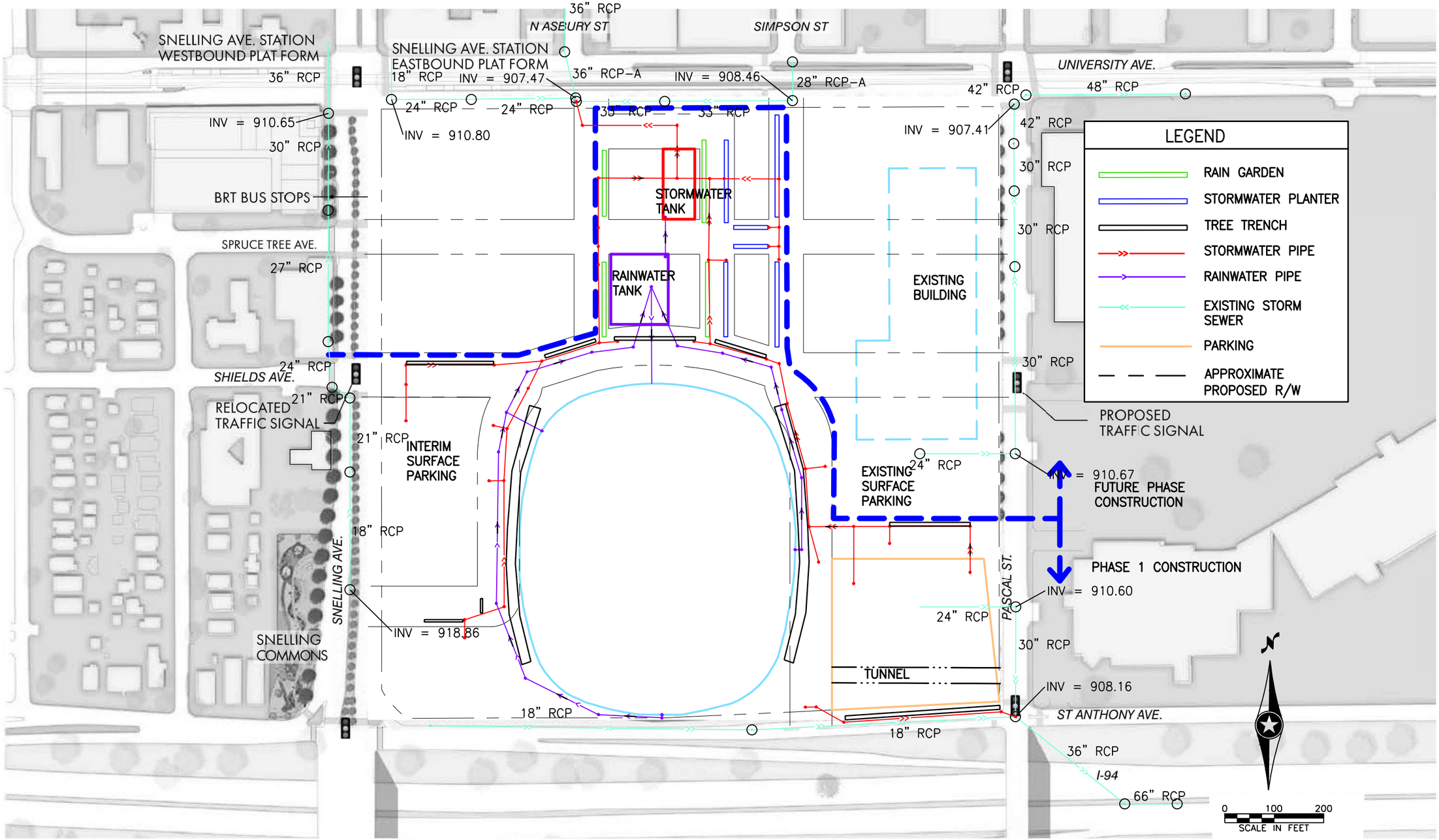
INTEGRATION OF STORMWATER INTO PARK SYSTEMS - PRECEDENT IMAGES

Sherbourne Common, Toronto - http://www.archdaily.com/449590/sherbourne-common-pfs-studio
Photo Credits: Tom Arban, Courtesy of PFS Studio, Courtesy of Waterfront Toronto, Aristea Rizakos

CANAL PARK, DC - http://landscapeperformance.org/case-study-briefs/canal-park
Photo Credits: OLIN



SITE PLAN



DRAFT-WORK IN PROCESS

POTENTIAL OPENING DAY ALTERNATIVE
DRAFT – PRELIMINARY – WORK IN PROGRESS
4/26/2016

CAPITOL REGION WATERSHED DISTRICT | SAINT PAUL | SRF Consulting Group, Inc. | ENGINEERS PLANNERS DESIGNERS

SNELLING MIDWAY STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

PHASE 1 COMPREHENSIVE STORMWATER PLAN LAYOUT

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Monday, June 13, 2016 12:28 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Monday, June 13, 2016 - 12:27 Submitted by anonymous user: 75.161.213.64 Submitted values are:

Name: Rob Spence
Address: 893 Goodrich Ave., St. Paul, MN, 55105
Comments: I enthusiastically support the plan that MN United and RK Midway have offered to improve the Midway area.

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Monday, June 13, 2016 12:21 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Monday, June 13, 2016 - 12:20 Submitted by anonymous user: 160.94.96.113 Submitted values are:

Name: Nieszner
Address: 1601 Lafond Ave. St. Paul, 55104
Comments: This will be great for the neighborhood, the city and the state.
Build iT!!

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Monday, June 13, 2016 12:14 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Monday, June 13, 2016 - 12:13 Submitted by anonymous user: 71.5.108.243 Submitted values are:

Name: Dominic Poulin
Address: 1335 W. Minnehaha Ave. #1 St. Paul, MN, 55104
Comments: I am 100% in favor of building the stadium. The placement in Midway, which I could walk to, could be sensible and fun.

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 10:00 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Saturday, June 11, 2016 - 21:59 Submitted by anonymous user: 166.175.190.85 Submitted values are:

Name: Nolan Leyse
Address: 17780 93rd Pl N, Maple Grove
Comments: I think an MLS stadium would be great for the city of St Paul. It provides more entertainment for locals and Minnesotans alike.

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 3:21 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Saturday, June 11, 2016 - 15:20 Submitted by anonymous user: 73.94.20.191 Submitted values are:

Name: Robert Cook
Address: 1913 Feronia Ave. St. Paul, MN 55104
Comments: I own a home less than a mile away from the proposed soccer stadium site. I strongly support this project.

From: Andrew Lovgren [mailto:lovgrena@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 2:50 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Minnesota United MLS Stadium Site Plan

Hello,

The MN United stadium and overall Midway redevelopment are great benefits to the area. The vacant lots and rundown, empty businesses are not the best use of a great area with some ideal transit options. The addition of the A and Green lines provide excellent service into that area.

Furthermore, the MN United ownership group have put together a very fair plan to assist in development and fund the stadium itself. Dr. McGuire and the rest of the ownership team clearly value the role they can play in the community and I believe it's in our best interest to support that effort.

Let's make St. Paul a place people want to go on a Friday night, visit over a weekend, and hopefully move to and raise a family. A couple people deciding they don't want change shouldn't stand in the way of beneficial investment in an area sorely in need of it.

Thank you for your consideration and work on this project. I hope you will support the MN United stadium and development plan.

-Andrew Lovgren

2045 Worcester Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55116

From: Wes Burdine [mailto:wes@wesburdine.com]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 2:02 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: stadium comments

Hi Kady,

I would like to submit the following comments for the commission as it reviews the soccer stadium plan. My name is Wes Burdine. My family moved to Midway in March, drawn in part by the soccer stadium. For us, it is not just a matter of a love of sports. To explain, let me briefly tell you about the Dark Clouds. The Dark Clouds are a group of soccer supporters, the kind who go crazy at games sing their hearts out. But soccer doesn't stop for us when the 90 minutes are up. Rather, soccer is a medium for engaging the world more broadly. That means proactively setting a tone for soccer that is anti-homphobia, anti-racist, and anti-bigotry of all kinds. It also means volunteering through our Silver Linings Foundation. It also means creating Refugees Welcome banners for the matches. And it also means raising money for both local and global charities.

The commission is far better suited to understanding the logistics of development than myself, but I wanted to write this letter to give you some insight into why this isn't just any development. Soccer has a unique role in society in the way it moves beyond just activity and into cultural threads. Throughout the US, soccer has exploded through the embrace of immigrant communities, young professionals, and families. A stadium in Midway presents us with the opportunity of perhaps economic development, but more importantly giving soccer an anchor in the community. I have already begun talking with the Dark Clouds about ways we can specifically organize our charity efforts and community engagement around Midway's neighborhoods. I hope that we get this opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Wes Burdine
1251 Charles Avenue
St. Paul

From: webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us [mailto:webmaster@ci.stpaul.mn.us]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 1:59 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Form submission from: Comments for Planning Commission Review - Snelling-Midway

Submitted on Saturday, June 11, 2016 - 13:59 Submitted by anonymous user: 66.87.145.2 Submitted values are:

Name: Alex Akers
Address: 1331 Bayard Ave
Comments: The Midway area is a mess. It's a blight at the top of what is otherwise a very nice neighborhood. It needs this stadium.

From: Nachiket Karnik [mailto:nachiketkarnik@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, June 11, 2016 12:20 PM
To: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)
Subject: MN United FC Stadium Testimony

For the Planning Commission:

Name: Nachiket Karnik
Address: 1798 Ashland Ave, Apt 14, Saint Paul, MN
Comments:
In one week I will move into a new home in the Midway neighborhood on the corner of Dunlap and Thomas. I purchased this home specifically because of how excited I was to hear of the stadium being built in the neighborhood. Without the stadium, I would not have moved to Midway.

Driving into the Twin Cities for the first time five years ago, I was astounded to see the absolute center of the city feature a vacant lot and an empty strip mall. Such a prime location being totally underutilized. As an employee of Macalester College since then I've had to drive by that lot many times and the same feeling remains: This area could be used so much better.

That's what Minnesota United want to do. The stadium and the associated development will be the centerpiece of a rejuvenated Midway. They will use land that is a blight on the city and the Midway neighborhood and replace with it a landmark Saint Paul can be proud of. It will draw residents from around the metro to spend their money.

I am also not at all concerned by the lack of parking. I have traveled to mid-city stadiums in Portland, Seattle, and many other cities. These stadiums don't have all the tremendous transit benefits together that the Snelling-University has. And yet they are all well-attended. Fans leave happy. The local residents are happy. Do not be moved by the scare stories. Public Transit is the future and this stadium will push that message loud and clear. It's good for the city's transit revenue and good for the environment.

Received 6.13.16

Saint Paul Planning Commission Comment Form

You may use this form to submit written testimony to the Saint Paul Planning Commission on the following project:

Minnesota United MLS Stadium Site Plan, Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan, or clarification Zoning Amendment

The Saint Paul Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for this project on:
Friday June 10, 8:30 am
Room 40 of City Hall, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul

Written testimony must be **received by**:
4:30 pm on Monday June 13, 2016

Your name and address are required for your comments to be considered part of the public record.

Once completed, you may place this form in the provided comment box, or mail it to:
Kady Dadlez, Department of Planning and Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Comments can also be submitted by email to: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Name: Bob Menssen

Address: 1303 W Minnehaha Ave St Paul 55102

Comments: I have been at above address for 20 years and I have seen projects and plans for that super block come and go. I support the full site plan but as raised in the hearing there are no guarentees on when RK Midway re-develops surrounding area. There should be contracual time guidelines as to when and how the area should be revitalized. One issue that has killed so many projects there is "Affordable Housing" or "Low Income Housing". Is Midway the only area where this applies? When projects go up in Highland or downtown they are all Market Rate. That lot has sat empty forever due to the city putting this restriction on developers. OVER →

Please do not put this hurdle in the way on this project. There is PLENTY of "Affordable Housing" in the Midway. Including the new Hamline Station Apartments. It is my belief that all construction on super block should be done in a timely matter. The way US Bank Stadium and surrounding area is being built is a great example. If building continues over 10 years it greatly inconveniences the residents and affects the businesses negatively. Again I fully support the WHOLE plan. It would be a beutiful addition to the already redevelopment along the Green Line.

Thank You,
Bob Meussen

From: **Margaret Schuster** <schuster.margaret.a@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jun 13, 2016 at 3:03 PM
Subject: St Paul Planning commission comment form - Midway stadium development
To: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Please find my comment form attached. I wanted to speak at the last community forum - but was unable to get called on. I think the leaders and community desperately needed to hear a positive word -- which my comments are -- because there was so much negativity in the room.

I wholeheartedly support the stadium and snelling-midway redevelopment plan. Please see my attached comment form. In case you cannot print it for some reason, my main points are:

1. The Midway improvements with regard to public transportation make this a sensible, viable, and intelligent choice. The Midway and its neighbors are ready and capable of supporting this effort.

2. Neighborhood fears about parking could be allayed using some of the ideas that were presented at the community forum, namely entering into agreements with flat lots in the area and / or State Fairgrounds which require purchase of a "parking spot" at the point of soccer ticket sales, providing shuttle transportation to/from these lots if necessary (as some could use the train, bus, or walk); and, providing free train rides to/from the soccer games for the first full season (as the St. Paul Saints did when they moved to CHS stadium).

3. The vacant bus lot and vacant store fronts along Snelling/University desperately need a facelift and injection of new customers, new businesses, and new job opportunities.This stadium and the development of the Midway plaza create such an opportunity.

4. Planning for walking, biking, and public transit are a MUST in any urban development. This plan begins to prioritize those realities.

5. Priority consideration of the development plan (for BOTH the stadium and the Midway Plaza) should include: solar power, electric car plug-ins and many bike racks to encourage alternative uses of power.

Thank you.
****

Margaret Schuster
1359 Blair Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104
schuster.margaret.a@gmail.com
home: 651.645.2079
cell: 612.805.9144

Saint Paul Planning Commission Comment Form

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Once completed, you may place this form in the provided comment box, or mail it to:
Kady Dadlez, Department of Planning and Economic Development
1400 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Comments can also be submitted by email to: kady.dadlez@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Name: Margaret Schuster

Address: 1369 Blair Ave, St Paul, MN 55104

Comments: I am 100% supportive of the stadium development + Snelling-Midway redevelopment. I believe the Midway is more than ready for development of this sort with improved public transportation already in place. Current businesses in the area need a boost and already empty storefront need + provide for new opportunities. I was encouraged to hear that a parking plan would be further developed to allay neighbor fears — for example, entering into agreements with Health East, RK Midway, possibly State Fairgrounds + others to require purchasing a parking spot at point of ticket sales, and shuttles to run fans to/from the stadium

* the Midway is ready + capable of supporting this effort

#8

June 13, 2016

To: St. Paul Planning Commission

From: Dennis Hill

Subject: Snelling-Midway Redevelopment Area

I am writing to strongly suggest that the Planning Commission make a final recommendation not to approve the Site Plan for the soccer stadium development proposed by Minnesota United FC. My primary reason for not supporting the Site Plan is that I believe a soccer stadium is not the best use for this site. The community has invested over $1 billion dollars to create a transit corridor in which this area of St. Paul is a key destination point. In my opinion constructing a soccer stadium primarily for use by a privately owned, professional team is not in keeping with the vision residents have for the area now that the transit infrastructure is in place. I believe the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and of all of St. Paul hope to see sustainable, mixed use development that would build upon the public investments that have been made in the area.

The many outstanding concerns contained in the Snelling-Midway Community Advisory Committee Report of May 26, 2016 reflect many of the concerns I have about the Stadium Site Plan and the Snelling-Midway Master Plan. Concerns that to date have not been adequately addressed by the developers of both plans.

Those would include a sufficient level of infrastructure accommodations to host events for up to 23,000 attendees such as parking, green space, tailgating areas and safe pathways for entering and exiting the stadium for people arriving by public transit, shuttle bus, bicycle and walking. Current conditions are unsafe for travel through the area and having 23,000 additional people converge on the area for an event would present a clear threat to public safety.

The opportunities for future development at this site now that the Green Line and the A-Line transit improvements are in place should not be lost in order to build a structure that would be a detriment to the quality of life for the community and a poor use of limited city resources available to support economic development.

Dennis Hill

76 Front Ave

St. Paul, MN 55117

HAMLINE MIDWAY COALITION
DISTRICT COUNCIL 11
1558 WEST MINNEHAHA AVENUE
ST. PAUL MN 55104
651.494.7682 | www.hamlinemidway.org

June 13, 2016

Subject: HMC Comments on Snelling Midway Site Master Plan & Minnesota United FC Soccer Stadium Opening Day Site Plan

To Whom It Concerns:

Hamline Midway Coalition/District Council 11 (HMC) broadly supports the vision of increased density, vibrancy, high-quality open space, and transit-oriented development at the Snelling Midway Site as presented in the Snelling Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan (Master Plan) and the Minnesota United FC Soccer Stadium Opening Day Site Plan.

Although the Snelling Midway Redevelopment Site is technically in Union Park (and Ward 1), Hamline Midway (and Ward 4) will experience significant impacts from the redevelopment of this site. To ensure that the redevelopment is an asset to Hamline Midway, we request that the City of Saint Paul take all necessary steps to ensure the following:

1. **Public Greenspace That Remains Public.** The open space proposed on this site will be a tremendous asset to the community, but only if it remains open to the public to use free of charge. Private events cannot monopolize this space.

2. **Minimum Density & Affordable Housing.** The density of the site suggested in the Master Plan is appropriate. Individual development projects should meet *or exceed* the heights shown. HMC would suggest a minimum of 6 story buildings at the new block to be created at the SE corner of Snelling and University, and a minimum of 4 story buildings elsewhere on the site (excluding the shops on the park). Anything less would not be enough density to justify the public investment in the site. *Redevelopment of the site should also include a minimum level of affordable housing.*

3. **Pedestrian Friendly Development.** A pedestrian friendly environment must be a priority as the site is developed. Amenities such as trees, furniture, pedestrian-scale lighting, and public art should be a required component of all developments on the site. Parking garage entry points should be minimized, and their interaction with the pedestrian realm carefully sited and designed to ensure safety. Parking garages themselves should be contained on the interior of buildings and screened with active uses. Also, *the proposed street bordering the greenspace on the north and west should be permanently closed to regular traffic.*

4. **Environmentally Friendly Development.** The Master Plan currently shows green roofs on many of the buildings within the site. As individual developments are proposed, green design should be a priority.

5. **A Community Benefits Agreement.** In order to ensure that the impacts of the site are positive, a community benefits agreement must be put in place that includes the following provisions:

    - *Detailed mitigation strategies for traffic, parking, noise, and trash.* The surrounding neighborhoods should be involved in the creation of these strategies.

    - *A designated community liaison for the soccer stadium and the broader redevelopment site.* A designated point of contact will ensure ongoing commitment to the site's usability (e.g. timely snow removal) and aesthetics (e.g. trash removal).

    - *No cost access to space at the stadium and/or adjacent buildings for community meetings and events hosted by Union Park District Council and Hamline Midway Coalition.*

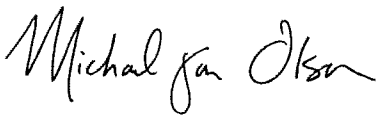
    - *Commitment from Minnesota United FC to hire and train staff from the local community.* We suggest specific targets for hiring from the adjacent neighborhoods and/or from Saint Paul and Minneapolis generally.

    - *A fund to support neighborhood improvement projects.* HMC regularly facilitates small scale neighborhood improvement projects implemented by community members who have a passion for their neighborhood. A fund to support such projects would be a tremendous benefit to the neighborhood.

6. **A Role for HMC in the Decision-Making Process.** As noted above, the Snelling Midway Site is located in Union Park. Given this, UPDC (District Council 13) will have a formal role in reviewing proposed developments. But given the impacts that redevelopment of this site will have on Hamline Midway, HMC should also have a formal role in the review process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael Jon Olson, Executive Director

NEIGHBORS AGAINST CORPORATE SUBSIDIES

1399 Sherburne Avenue • St. Paul, Minnesota 55104 • 651-644-8558 • stpaulnacs@gmail.com

June 13, 2016

Barbara Wencl, Chair
St. Paul Planning Commission
1400 City Hall Annex
25 Fourth Street West
Saint Paul MN 55102

Dear Chair Wencl and fellow Commissioners:

As I noted in my testimony before the Planning Commission on Friday, I believe that consideration of the proposed Snelling-Midway master plan, soccer stadium site plan, and zoning clarification amendment is premature and that the entire planning process has been driven by politics and arbitrary deadlines rather than by sound planning principles. Not only has your own commission staff declined to make a recommendation at this time because "further development of plans is required," a June 3rd letter from MnDOT indicates the need for a traffic impact study and the possibility of a MnDOT Layout Review. In addition, only preliminary testing of soil samples has been conducted to evaluate the extent of pollution at the site.

Although the city has held several open houses, public comment was only permitted at two of those events, and even then it was limited to approximately 15 minutes each time. While the CAC Task Force held several meetings from December through May, members of the public were not allowed to comment on any of the presentations or discussions that took place there. And the City Council allowed just 15 minutes of testimony prior to voting approval on March 2nd of $18.4 million in infrastructure funding for the stadium—meaning the city has devoted less than an hour to public input on this enormously consequential development.

More importantly, concerns raised about traffic, parking, noise, size and scope of the stadium, lack of job creation, etc., have not been adequately addressed by the city—nor has the city obtained binding commitments (from the principals involved in designing and building the stadium) that anything beyond a soccer stadium and some adjoining green space will be constructed on the Midway Superblock site. Any developer can promise to build something "depending on market conditions," and in the case of RK Midway, market conditions have allowed for the ongoing neglect of the Midway Shopping Center for the past 15 years. Assurances without financial commitments and enforceable development agreements are meaningless.

In the pages that follow, I have outlined the more salient points of concern that I don't believe could be adequately conveyed in my three minutes of testimony on Friday. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Tom Goldstein
Founder
Neighbors Against Corporate Subsidies

WHY THE PROPOSED SOCCER STADIUM SITE PLAN SHOULD NOT BE APPROVED

1. The project fails the City Council's own test for economic viability

On August 26, 2015, the St. Paul City Council passed a resolution in support of a tax exemption at the Midway site and a "fair, sensible plan…for the construction of needed public infrastructure around the site" *so long as* the "City has *strong, specific evidence* that the stadium and public infrastructure investments will help catalyze additional investments on the Midway Shopping Center site consistent with the Snelling Station Area Plan." In fact, the city has no such evidence.

Economists who have been studying the stadium boom for the past thirty years have found that stadiums do not generate ancillary development beyond the bars and restaurants that sometimes spring up around them. At most, stadiums simply shift spending patterns within a community. Neither the city nor the team has produced any evidence to the contrary, and it is incumbent upon the promoters of this project to demonstrate that the City Council's requirements have been met. While the master plan may envision a hotel, high-rise office buildings, movie theaters, housing, etc., absent any financial commitments or developer agreements, such renderings are mere speculation—they don't come close to "strong, specific evidence" that anything will be built other than a soccer stadium.

2. The stadium violates the Master Plan

The Snelling Area Plan and previous iterations of a the Master Plan have always focused on breaking up the monolithic Midway Shopping Center strip mall and establishing a street and block grid on the Midway Superblock site. At no point was a stadium or similar outdoor entertainment venue contemplated because it was not compatible with the plan—hence the need for an amendment to make such a use allowable within the permitted zoning for this area.

A stadium that will occupy nearly a quarter of the Superblock site will completely disrupt the proposed street and block grid—and the footprint of the stadium will likely exceed the overall size of the very strip mall that the city wants to eliminate. As PED Director Jonathan Sage-Martinson noted in his testimony, many years of careful planning went into the development of the Snelling Station Area Plan. Why would the city throw all that planning away in favor of a suburban style building that will dominate the site?

Worse than that, stadiums usually serve as a disincentive for surrounding development. In fact, in its application to the Federal Transit Administration for a joint-development project on this site, the Metropolitan Council wrote "if the development proceeds as planned, this may be one of the rare examples of a sports facility delivering significant economic development benefits…." Rare indeed, particularly when there is nothing but vague assurances that related development will occur.

3. The Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) is not credible.

A careful reading of the AUAR shows numerous assumptions being made using generalities rather than legitimate analysis based on specific data. This is particularly true with regards to traffic and parking issues, where the authors conclude that as many as 70 percent of soccer fans will use alternative transit options to attend games—even though "Metro Transit says that (only) about 14 percent of baseball fans take public transit to Twins games and about 13 percent of Gophers football fans take mass transit to TCF Bank Stadium at the University of Minnesota."

How did Stantec get to the 70 percent figure? By claiming that the *mere available capacity* of alternative transit modes—light rail, bus rapid transit, park and ride shuttles—is evidence that soccer fans will in fact use those alternative modalities. That's not even close to science; it's just speculation.

Interestingly, Minnesota United Owner Bill McGuire claimed that nearly 80 percent of soccer fans in Portland and New York used public transportation to attend games. If those numbers are accurate, why wasn't that information included in the AUAR? Simply put, consultants and city staff can't pretend to do an accurate analysis when the effort is rushed in order to meet an arbitrary deadline established by Major League Soccer to ensure its proposed franchisee gets the necessary approvals for the stadium it desires to build.

More troubling about the so-called "traffic study" is that it appears the report's authors did not interview the one demographic that matters: the current fans of the team. Without knowing where those people live and how they would plan to travel to games, any purported studies are simply best guesses. Although I have requested on two occasions that the team provide this data, they have refused. Is that because such data will show that the majority of the fan base resides in the suburbs and thus will more than likely drive to games? We don't know, and apparently neither do the authors of this report.

Even if one could persuade soccer fans to use park and ride lots like those at the State Fairgrounds, if 2,000 cars all converge on a parking lot to claim their assigned parking space, that will still lead to significant traffic jams—as borne out at stadiums that already have "reserved" parking spots for certain season ticket holders. If the city can find hundreds of neighborhood lots or businesses to participate in the plan, that might address parking concerns—but if people didn't mind paying for parking, why would they take the time driving around neighborhoods looking for a free spot and clogging up the streets? I'm aware of no other place where this scheme has been tried or been successful, and little information has been gathered that would lead one to conclude that such a plan would be workable for soccer games in the Midway.

4. Who really benefits?

(Please see attached op-ed piece from the Pioneer Press. One key beneficiary will be R.K. Midway, which as a result of the city's use agreement with the team will gain access to 1.5 acres of prime real estate at the edge of Snelling and St. Anthony—cleaned up at taxpayer expense. Not only does this grant valuable development rights to an absentee landlord for the next 52 years, it removes any leverage the city might have had to force long overdue improvements to a shopping center where the parking lot has been crumbling for a decade and litter is everywhere. In contrast, Wal-Mart resurfaced its parking lot last year and Target just last week. RK Midway has not resurfaced and re-striped its parking lot in fifteen years—and the design of the lot is the worst to be found anywhere in the area.)

5. No Meaningful Public Process

As noted in my cover letter, public comment at the city's open houses has been limited to approximately 15 minutes at just two of these events—both of which were held *after* the City Council had already voted on March 2, 2016 to approve $18.4 million in public infrastructure around the stadium. And that decision itself was made after just 15 minutes of testimony. If the city is not going to take seriously the public interest when pursuing such a major redevelopment, the Planning Commission needs to be the body that puts the brakes on the project and insists on the kind of due diligence that has otherwise been lacking.

6. Any Action Taken Would be Premature

As noted above, the Planning Commission's own staff report indicates that "a staff recommendation on the master plan request is premature" and cites the following information as still needed:

1. Public and private roads and their features and dimensions must be clearly identified in the master plan. Detailed information on the location and widths of sidewalks and bicycle facilities must also be provided on the master plan.
2. An open space plan, including a preliminary design treatment for open space, must be provided. It is unclear whether this will be publicly or privately owned open space, who will make improvements to it and who will maintain it. This information must be provided in the master plan.
3. Not enough detail exists in the stadium site plan to determine whether the development meets density, height, and setback requirements and master plan standards. This information needs to be provided as part of the site plan submittal.
4. A preliminary landscape plan indicating street trees and landscape treatment of streets and public spaces must be provided.
5. A preliminary stormwater plan identifying preliminary locations of structures and methods to be used in managing stormwater and surface water on the site must be submitted.
6. Master plan guidelines should be submitted addressing the areas of bicycle facilities; landscaping; street furnishings/lighting/wayfinding; building placement, heights, massing, form and facades; energy efficiency; parking; stormwater management; utilities; and public art.

Even if such information is forthcoming in the next month, to vote in July without gathering additional public input—after concerned residents have had the chance to carefully review this additional information—ensures that we will end up with a project far inferior to that which could be achieved by asking tough questions and having the kind of robust public engagement process that such a major development demands.

It is my hope that your loyalty toward the residents of the city and holding the City Council accountable for the language of its own resolution will take precedence over loyalty to the individual who appointed you to this position.

Thank you.

OPINION

Tom Goldstein: Who really benefits from St. Paul's soccer deal?

"We want this facility to be the cornerstone of professional soccer throughout our state," said Dr. Bill McGuire, principal owner of Minnesota United FC. (Courtesy of Minnesota United)

By TOM GOLDSTEIN |
May 20, 2016 | UPDATED: 3 weeks ago

Nearly 10 years ago, then-Pioneer Press reporter Jason Hoppin began a story on the vacant bus barn site in the Midway this way: "In an apparent last-minute switch, Home Depot — not competitor Lowe's — may have the inside track in developing a prime piece of St. Paul real estate near Snelling Avenue and Interstate 94." Later in the same article, Hoppin wrote, "The project would be located on an almost 5-acre parcel adjacent to a companion 10-acre piece of property that once housed a Metro Transit bus storage facility. The 15-acre site is considered among the premier commercial development opportunities in the Twin Cities."

Hoppin was not some wayward journalist. Reporters from other publications wrote similar things at the time: "The Met Council owns the 9.5-acre expanse of prime property at Snelling Avenue and Interstate 94 … In terms of prime, re-developable property, the site is near the top of the city of St. Paul's list," reported Bill Clements for Finance and Commerce. Even the Pioneer Press editorial board acknowledged the importance of the site, opining in 2005 that "the debates around development of the bus barn site are important … what moves into the bus barn site needs to be decided with an eye toward the future, namely its impact on local traffic and its fit with light rail."

So what happened? How did a prime piece of real estate become a neglected "dirt pile" the mayor repeatedly refers to as a "brownfield site"? In truth, the land remains desirable, which might explain why RK Midway, the New York-based owner of Midway Shopping Center, was willing to pay a reported $10 million for the former bus barn location in 2014.

Unfortunately, the Met Council and RK Midway did not reach an agreement, and that agency's intransigence, combined with a lack of interest among our elected officials — until a soccer stadium was the goal — has much more to do with the vacancy at the northeast corner of Snelling and I-94 than a lack of market demand. As far as anyone can determine, the parcel appears to never have actually been put up for sale, and when bids were supposedly being entertained in 2014, no developer was offered a cleaned-up, shovel-ready site — or the option to lease rather than purchase. Only the team, vis-a-vis the city of St. Paul's rental agreement with the Met Council, was given that opportunity.

Contrary to the Pioneer Press's decade-old call for debate and answering questions, no traffic or parking studies having been completed, no economic research has been conducted, and the more rigorous EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) has been eschewed in favor of an AUAR (Alternative Urban Areawide Review) — a document that won't be available until June. Yet the city council has already voted to provide $18.4 million in infrastructure improvements and the Met Council committed to chip in as much as $4.5 million for environmental remediation.

Economists who have been studying the stadium boom for the past 30 years have found scant evidence that stadiums catalyze neighboring development beyond some bars and restaurants — and that quite often they simply shift spending habits from one part of town to another. Even Minnesota United managing partner Bill McGuire has acknowledged — two weeks ago to the soccer stadium Citizen's Advisory Committee — that a large part of Midway Center might remain parking lots in the short term, "Whether you can get someone to build an office building — who knows? McGuire said.

Of course, none of these uncertainties have stopped the litany of media reports about the stadium's benefits, including a recent editorial by this newspaper which claims that a soccer stadium represents a "catalytic opportunity" for St. Paul. But with nearly a third of the city's property off the tax rolls, who really benefits from infrastructure improvements for the stadium and maintaining a tax exemption for the former bus barn site?

Certainly Bill McGuire and his partners — which, including the heirs of Curt Carlson and Carl Pohlad, as well as Glen Taylor, represent three of the wealthiest families in the state. Like most sports team owners, the group will be allowed to depreciate the $100 million MLS franchise cost and, by making a gift of the stadium to the city, presumably reap savings based on their tax bracket that could amount to somewhere between $48 and $60 million.

And don't forget RK Midway, the absentee landlord that manages arguably the most underutilized and neglected retail shopping center in the city. Thanks to the generous lease terms between the City and the Met Council, RK Midway will receive the development rights to 1.5 cleaned-up acres of the bus barn site that adjoin Snelling Avenue. If those rights are as valuable as some developers have speculated, the company could reap millions at the expense of taxpayers — and control that portion of the site for as little as $85,000 in annual rent payments.

Fortunately, Midway neighbors won't be completely neglected. In return for additional traffic, parking headaches, noise, lost retail outlets, and the continued burden of subsidizing a tax-exempt parcel for billionaires, we get the privilege of being in walking distance of professional soccer.

If that's the price for matching Minneapolis in the number of professional sports venues, so be it. You don't get to be the "most livable city in America" by pussyfooting around.

A lawyer and former St. Paul School Board member, Tom Goldstein lives in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood.

Tags: Letters

Tom Goldstein

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The 10 Automotive Innovations You Can't Live Without

It was not so very long ago that telephones, microwaves and computers were considered mere fads for a privileged few. But...

By ACDelco