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Sent: Thursday, August 1, 2019 11:10 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: 19-1003 - demolition/parking lot comments

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Dear Council Representatives,

I would like to follow up on comments I made at the July 30 J&A regarding the Mayo Clinic permit request to demolish buildings and add on to a parking lot.

There are at least three reasons I hope you will deny, or at least refer for further study, this permit request.

First, the resolution you passed on July 11 pledges our city and community to carbon drawdown and transitioning from fossil fuel use to 100% renewables. Because of that pledge, it's probable that new assessments will need to be included in the cost/benefit analyses of projects going forward. This might be the first opportunity.

For example, the *embodied carbon* of existing buildings should be considered. Embodied carbon is all the CO2 released during processes and activities (mining, milling, manufacturing, fabrication, processing, transportation, construction etc) that go into making a building and all the CO2 released during its demolition. As I mentioned at the J&A meeting, researchers in the UK have concluded that demolishing and replacing a building there "costs" 4.5 times more carbon than refurbishing a building. There are now tools for measuring this embodied carbon. Carbon cost assessments are different than "sustainability" assessments. Green space and flood mitigation probably don't contribute much to carbon costs. Have carbon costs been assessed? When these new costs are added in, does demolishing buildings really meet the requirements of our new goals? (This is also something to consider when building permits are sought, too.)

Also, how does increasing the incentive for people to drive their personal fossil fueled, greenhouse gas-emitting vehicles support or contradict our new carbon/renewable goals? It seems that if you say you want to reduce carbon emissions and a large amount of those emissions come from fossil fueled vehicles, one of the first things you would do is find ways to reduce the number of those vehicles by incentives or penalties. How does adding free parking spaces encourage people to drive less and emit fewer greenhouse gases?

Next, housing - I realize these specific buildings are not meant to be reconstructed, but the loss-of-housing value must be included someplace. As you know, we have an *affordable* housing problem in our city. Demolishing dwellings and replacing them with more expensive housing does not solve this problem, nor does replacing homes with "green space" and parking lots. Our city, at last census, has at least 25 percent of residents living at or below the poverty line. As you know, that line is a bare minimum for existence; many more people and families are just plain poor. The Fair Housing report notes that nearly one-third of our residents spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing. What is the plan to deal with this major problem which is not just about finding housing, but also about being fair and equitable? Every dwelling that is demolished adds to the problem. Where are the people whose affordable housing has been replaced with unaffordable housing (or parking lots) supposed to go?

A friend of mine who lives in the Gundersen Clinic area produced a video a few years ago called, "There Goes the Neighborhood," documenting the systematic removal of affordable housing for parking lots. We seem to love money and cars more than people. In fact many years ago when I challenged my council representative (no longer serving) on

approving more housing demolition in that area for parking, he told me, "We can make more in PILOT payments than we can in property taxes." Nothing much has changed, apparently, as the main J&A questions on this issue seemed to be about making sure PILOT payments were in place, and the announcement by Mayo that PILOT payments would be made seemed to answer all the concerns. News reports about the recent replacement of a whole block of affordable housing with new, more expensive housing was celebrated as adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to property valuation. There were no stories about where are the people who used to live in that neighborhood and who can't afford to any more. This money > people attitude is a problem. People need places to live that they can afford to pay for. If those are smaller or older homes, so be it. Small, older homes can be refurbished to be energy efficient, easy to keep, and affordable. This is a serious issue and here's an opportunity to think about it more deeply.

Finally, transportation. I truly and deeply have to challenge the idea that we can't change people's behaviors put forth by City Planner Gilman at the J&A meeting. If we can't, why have planners at all? Why do we have noise ordinances, and parking and drinking rules, and tavern and cat and dog licensing? Why do we have health codes? If something is harmful to people or a community, don't we try to regulate it? Why should driving cars be any different, especially considering what a health hazard and environmental disaster they are.

In fact, not far from here is an great example of a city *planning* to become the world's number one medical destination and planning a modern transportation system that will allow them to move people where they need to go without adding congestion, health, infrastructure, and environmental costs of accommodating every individual's car driving desires. I encourage you to look at Rochester, Minnesota's Destination Medical Center plan, specifically its transportation plan which envisions a ring of parking facilities where people transfer to Bus Rapid Transit shuttles that takes them into and around the city center.

People use park and shuttle all the time, at airports and hotels, to fairs and events, to travel in other cities and countries. No one who goes to the Art Museum in Chicago expects to drive there and have free parking. In fact, for a medical facility, it's possible that park and shuttle is easier and more calming for many patients than driving in an unfamiliar city, finding parking (sometimes far from the facility entrance), getting to the appointment, remembering where they parked afterward, and having to navigate back out.

If we plan it, it will happen. In 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, planners wanted fewer cars in their city center so they built a *transferium* on the outskirts and provided secure parking with free transit passes while charging much more to park within the city. A well-used secure park and shuttle system was in place in Chapel Hill, North Carolina when I was a student there in the 1970s! The Twin Cities are planning to reduce the number of private cars from regional roads by 50,000 over the next 10 years. There are many more examples.

This is why I again urge you to define a comprehensive transportation plan for our city's future, where we already know people want to get around without having to own a car (more walk- and bike-ability and more public transit); where there will be more ride-sharing and autonomous, continuous-use vehicles requiring fewer parking spaces; and, in our very near future, where carbon emissions will determine our very *survivability*.

I encourage you to use this permit request as a prompt to rethink some of the old ways and consider new ways to address our issues and think about our future. The exciting and hopeful part is that there *are* new ways and that others are already doing them, and that they provide an opportunity to strengthen our community and improve the quality of life for all its residents.

I understand the Jenga-like character of balancing the needs of people, especially regular not rich people, against not wanting to drive big businesses and employers away. It's not easy. But the balance needs to be adjusted I think.

I've included some links to things discussed here.

Thank you.

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"The Urgency of Embodied Carbon and What You Can Do About It" by Paula Melton, BuildingGreen.com (buildinggreen.com/feature/urgency-embodied-carbon-and-what-you-can-do-about-it)

"Demolishing Old Houses and Building New Adds to Climate Change," by Charles Glover, 17 March, 2008, The Telegraph (www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/earthnews/3336318/Demolishing-old-houses-and-building-new-adds-to-climate-change.html)

"Rethinking 'Free' Parking Policies," by Deron Lovaas, 15 September, 2014, Natural Resources Defense Council (www.nrdc.org/experts/deron-lovaas/rethinking-free-parking-policies)

"There Goes the Neighborhood," by Obbie King, 10 April, 2016 (https://youtu.be/xd0-NlmoUYQ)

"Americans Shouldn't Have to Drive, but the Law Insists on It," by Gregory H. Shill, 9 July, 2019 The Atlantic (https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/07/car-crashes-arent-always-unavoidable/592447/)

Destination Medical Center (dmc.mn/plan-priorities)

"How Seattle Children's Hospital Took the Lead on Healthy Transportation," by Angie Schmitt, 8 May, 2015, StreetsBlogUSA (usa.streetsblog.org/2015/05/08/how-seattle-childrens-hospital-took-the-lead-on-healthy-transportation/)

"A New Parking Garage in 's-Hertogenbosch," Bicycle Dutch blog (bicycledutch.wordpress.com/2018/05/01/a-new-parking-garage-in-s-hertogenbosch/)

"Twin Cities Plan for a Future with More People, Fewer Cars," by Rachel Dovey, 5 October, 2017, Next City (nextcity.org/daily/entry/twin-cities-transportation-plan-more-people-fewer-cars)

"The End of Parking Lots As We Know Them: Designing For A Driverless Future," by Alan Ohnsman, 18 May, 2018, Forbes (www.forbes.com/sites/alanohnsman/2018/05/18/end-of-parking-lot-autonomous-cars/#3e6b38ff7244)