

Sent: Monday, June 3, 2019 5:57 PM

Umbraco Forms

First Name Patricia

Last Name Greenwood

Let it be recorded that I oppose PL 19-068 UDC Map Amendment to Rezone Property at Lester River Golf Course, From RR-1 (Rural Residential 1) and R-1 (Residential-Traditional), to MU-N (Mixed Use-Neighborhood) and P-1 (Parks and Open Space), by the City of Duluth

From: Thomas, John (MPCA)
Sent: Wednesday, June 5, 2019 1:52 PM
To: planning <planning@DuluthMN.gov>
Subject: Proposed Rezoning for Portion of Lester Park Golf Course

To whomever is overseeing this proposal:

As a nearby resident (6219 E. Superior St.) of the effected property, I have concerns regarding the proposed zoning change.

In advance of the upcoming Planning Commission meeting I am requesting a response to the following questions:

1. Can you direct me to a web address to view City of Duluth platted streets?
2. The current driving range is included in the zoning proposal. Is the driving range also part of the 50 acres being considered for sale by the City? If it is not, why the proposed zoning change for the driving range?
3. Where would access to any future development be located – from the Lester River Road and/or east Superior Street and/or and improved 62nd Avenue East?
4. As the owner of two undeveloped lots abutting 62nd Avenue East, I am very concerned that access to any future development could be via that street, with significant assessments to me as a property owner for street improvements, sewer and water installation. I have no intention of developing those lots and so would not benefit by the “improvements”. Is that a possible development scenario or is there something that would preclude that as an option?

John Thomas
6219 E. Superior St.
Duluth, MN 55804

From: Steven Robertson <srobertson@DuluthMN.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 06, 2019 9:44 AM
To: Thomas, John (MPCA)
Subject: FW: Proposed Rezoning for Portion of Lester Park Golf Course

Mr. Thomas,

Good morning! I listened to your voice mail, and I was forwarded your email from my coworker. I can answer your questions below first, and follow it up with a phone call later today if you still have questions, concerns.

1. The county has an excellent site that shows the right of way (and other information).

<https://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/departments-a-z/planning-development/enterprise-gis/county-land-explorer>

you need to click on the blue “land explorer” button to launch the program. You can then zoom into your property and see the platted right of way lines. See image I cut and pasted at the end of this email.

2. I frankly am not involved in any potential development discussions or negotiations. I am only rezoning to MU-N the portion that was called out by council action last month, and rezoning a large portion of the rest of the golf course to a P-1 zoning designation (which is typically used for most of our parks). I am assuming that the area chosen was the area easiest to develop with best access to water/sewer/roads, and had the least impact on the function of the rest of the golf course.

3 and 4 I have only ever seen different potential concept plans for some different housing configurations, and even though I am only involved in the zoning process, from what I recall seeing, development was likely going to use Lester River Road, or cut across to East Superior Street. While I can't swear on a stack of bibles that 62nd ave will never be improved (as again I am not aware of any current development proposal), I can tell you it would be easiest and cheapest for a development to connect to the existing road network on Lester or Superior (or improve existing intersections to make them safer) than to build a brand new road (to city standards, which is typically much more expensive than what is done for private roads or driveways).

I hope this information helps. If you would like, I can still call you later this afternoon.

Steven Robertson | Senior Planner | City of Duluth | 411 W 1st St Duluth, Room 110, MN 55802 | 218-730-5295 | srobertson@duluthmn.gov

From: Thomas, John (MPCA)

Sent: Friday, June 07, 2019 12:18 PM

To: Steven Robertson <srobertson@DuluthMN.gov>

Subject: RE: Proposed Rezoning for Portion of Lester Park Golf Course

Thank you for your response. I sent a letter to the editor regarding the proposal and suggested interested parties should appear at the hearing and/or send you an email with any concerns. Hope that is acceptable and that such emails might become part of the hearing record.

Sincerely,

John Thomas

Umbraco Forms

Form Results

First Name

Louise

Last Name

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Sent: Sunday, June 9, 2019 4:02 PM

Message

Re: PL 19-069 UDC Map Amendment to Rezone Property at Enger Park Golf Course, From R1 (Residential-Traditional), to R-2 (Residential-Urban), We are opposed to rezoning of the above mentioned property from R1 to R2. Any proposed R2 housing developments in this area would create excessive traffic/congestion along the Skyline corridor/Enger Park corridor and Skyline/Piedmont intersection. Preferentially, this area would be rezoned to P-1 and maintained as open space as it is the last stretch of public space along the Skyline corridor in the heart of Duluth. Respectfully, Louise and Bill Curnow P.S. The "Planning & Development" link on your web page connects to the "Contact Parks & Recreation" comment page.

Recaptcha

From: Virgil Boehland
Sent: Monday, June 10, 2019 6:01 AM
To: planning <planning@DuluthMN.gov>
Subject: Keeping Lester Green

Planning Commission members and Duluth City Councilors:

Here are some additional questions for the Duluth Zoning Commission and for Duluth City Council members concerning Lester Park land that someone will be asking at the re-zoning meeting:

1. Do you see the precedent setting problem of selling off Duluth Park space for private development?
2. Has a survey been made to learn what property is available for private development without using public Duluth park space?
3. Can we find out when, in the history of Duluth, Duluth Park property has been sold off for private development?
4. Does everyone understand that golfing could be suspended at Enger and Lester park without the need for that land to be converted to houses, garages, parking, streets, cement and tar?
5. Does everyone understand that all of Duluth and Enger Park golfing was set aside as public space decades ago and some of it goes way back to land purchased with money donated by West End furniture dealer Bert Enger in 1921? His 1931 will included more money for the park's development, and in 1939 Enger Tower was built in the park in his honor.
6. What developer, what person, or persons, has been championing this effort to convert public park space to private housing development?
7. Has any effort been made to determine what the impact of this private land development on public park space would be? Should an environmental impact study be conducted before proceeding with this move?

Duluth Residents/Duluth area residents/Minnesota residents care deeply about keeping designated park space, park space.

Virg Boehland

Umbraco Forms

First Name

David

Last Name

Pohlen

Sent: **Tuesday, June 11, 2019 10:40 AM**

Message

Dear Planning Commission Members; I am writing to you today to express my opposition to the rezoning of land at Enger and Lester golf courses (PL 19-068, PL 19-069) in preparation of their sale to a private housing developer. In the past 20 years here in Duluth I have golfed once. At Enger. (I played terribly, by the way) I do not consider myself to be a golfer, but I do not believe that land used for golf, or any public use, should be sold, unless there is complete, compelling and convincing evidence of a NEED to do so, and if it directly benefits the citizens of Duluth. I am opposed to this proposed rezoning for the following reasons –

1. The rezoning and sale of any park land, especially for private development and private gain, sets a dangerous precedent. The property which is slated for rezoning and eventual sale to a private developer is PUBLIC land. It belongs to the citizens of the City of Duluth. It does not belong to the administration in city hall, and it should not be available to the highest bidder. Period.

2. The purpose of park land is to provide for recreational opportunities for the Citizens of the City of Duluth and others. It is also to preserve natural areas for wildlife, air and water quality, and to improve the overall quality of life for the citizens. Park land should not be viewed as an asset to be sold.

3. Have you, as a Planning Commission Member, seen any plans for these developments? Detailed plans, showing the effect of increased traffic on the roads if 400 housing units were to be constructed on the Lester Park site? The Cost to the Citizens of Duluth for increased repair? The cost to the Citizens of Duluth for utilities and infrastructure expansion? The cost to the Citizens of Duluth to maintain this infrastructure? Has the public been informed of the ramifications to the IDS 709 school boundaries with the addition of 400 housing units on the East end of town? That would most likely require a change in the school boundaries and directly affect the schools that people miles away in the more central part of the city would attend. Has that been discussed as part of a public process? Has the school district been consulted? Have you seen a detailed breakdown of how the money from a sale will be spent? Not generalizations saying that they are going to “sell this, then use the money to fix that”, but detailed costs and plans so you can make an informed decision? Have those been made available, or is there blind trust in the unknown goals and any back-room dealings of the administration? How much money would the sale of the driving range at Enger Park bring into the parks department? How much does it cost to reconstruct the driving range in a different location to replace the one lost? How much does it cost to reconfigure the holes at Enger to accommodate this new driving range? How much does it cost to realign Skyline Parkway like was shown in the golf course report? Who will pay for that? How much other park land and wooded areas will be lost to accommodate this new driving range and hole configuration? Would a sale of land produce a one-time influx of cash with no long-term positive impact to golf? If park land is sold, consider requiring that the tax revenue generated by the development is returned to the golf course for upkeep and maintenance, not simply put into the general fund. When all of these needed street and utility improvements / road realignments / golf reconfigurations come in at a higher cost than the revenue generated by any land sale that might occur, then what? Without know going into it, selling the land could end up COSTING the citizens of Duluth more than what is generated in revenue. How much

money is the city going to lose? But you don't know that now, do you? But you are still expected to vote on setting this process in motion. How can you, as a Planning Commission Member, vote to approve the sale of park land without knowing the complete picture and the ramification of such a decision? That shouldn't be done.

4. There currently are many parcels of property for sale for housing throughout the City of Duluth. Hawk Ridge Estates still, after over 10 years, has vacant parcels (many owned by non-profit housing entities) which are ready for building. Harbor Highlands right above downtown has many vacant parcels, again, ready to have housing built on them. And the Coffee Creek development between Trinity Road (HWY 53) and Anderson Road has a very large number of lots available for purchase and housing construction. All of these parcels are platted, have utilities run to them, and they are ready for construction. If there was a high demand, these would have been purchased and sold a long time ago. Just think of the housing that could be built at the site of Central High School. But there it sits, empty. Where is the demand? There is a huge piece of land in a prime location that is just screaming for redevelopment, yet it sits vacant. If there was truly a need for housing, this property would have been snatched up a long time ago. There have been multiple multi-family housing buildings (some more proposed even on the agenda for today's meeting), constructed over the past few years without a single acre of public land sold. There is not a shortage of land for housing construction that warrants the sale of a public asset to a private developer.

5. To say that the City needs to sell the golf course land because golf is losing money for the City is simply a ridiculous argument. The City has to be fiscally responsible in the services it provides (And there are many, many, other ways the city could save more than the amount of money being "lost" on golf), but the purpose of park land is not to make money for the City. The purpose of the City government is not to be the supplier of public land for private development and private gain. The City should not be in the housing and land development business. That is not what the government is there for. If being a real estate broker is what the city has become, then make all public park land available to the highest bidder. Why not? Sell Enger Park – The tower, the Japanese Garden, everything. Just sell it. It is not making the City one dime. Just think of the views from the penthouse

apartment on the top 2 levels of Enger Tower. Beautiful! Sell the Lakewalk. All of it. How many millions of dollars are spent repairing that every year? Just think of the housing that could be built right there along the shore. Chester Bowl – I would LOVE to have a house where the current chalet in Chester Bowl is. Maybe at the top of the ski hill would be a good place for a few more houses. Can I make an offer on it? No? Why not? It doesn't make the City any money, so why not sell it? Hartley Park? Rezone it and turn it into affordable housing. Why not? Just sell the whole thing. I'm sure someone would pay at least a little money to the city for it. I will pay the City \$100 for it and the City will come out ahead in eliminated maintenance costs, and getting the property back on the tax rolls. I would even let the great expanse of bike trails in the park to continue to exist. That should make the city happy. (And I just saw the other day a for sale sign up for the property across Woodland Avenue from Hartley Park. 8 acres. Since there apparently is such a need for housing, I would expect that a developer will come along and builds 15 houses there, rather than asking for public land) How about the Magney Snively Natural Area? That land is beautiful up there! Riverside Park? Gary New Duluth Rec Center? Morgan Park? Washington Square? Park Point? Sell it all! Why not? Where do you stop? Where do you draw the line? If a developer needs public land for private housing while other land ready for construction sits vacant, there is not the housing demand we are being told that there is. The City should not be in the business of selling public land to make sure realtors and the construction trades members are busy and making money.

6. If there is no need for those 9 holes of golf at Lester Park, shut them down. Stop maintaining them. Save money in reduced maintenance. But DO NOT sell them. It was the long range vision of people before us here in Duluth that established much of our parks and open space that we all enjoy today and make this a great city to live in. Short-sighted sale of park land for any potential short-term monetary gain (which has not been adequately presented by city staff) is, well, simply foolish. What habitat or recreational opportunities may there be in 20 years, 50 years, 100 years, that will be lost if this, or other park land is sold?

7. All options should be explored and tried before even considering shutting down 9 holes of golf, let alone even discussing selling the land. All options, benefits, hazards should be

studied. The public should be consulted and fully informed of these decisions prior to their land being sold out from underneath them for the benefit of a private developer.

According to the recently completed golf course study, green fees have increased once over the past 13 years. Once. And the increase was \$1 per round. Has the cost of maintenance and repair of the golf courses not increased by more than that over the past 13 years? Why have the fees not increased accordingly to cover those maintenance and repair costs? Why not actually increase the green fees by a few dollars to cover this shortfall? If that hasn't been tried, why not? It seems to me that there has not been adequate exploration of alternatives to cover the apparent shortfall from golf. (Didn't Lester Park Golf Course actually MAKE money last year?) If following all weighing of the pros and cons, studies, complete analysis, planning, true total cost analysis, and public input, shows a clear, sustainable, substantial, long-term benefit to the citizens of Duluth, maybe selling the land could then be considered. But that has not happened, and the rezoning should not occur until all information has been made available. David P. Thank you.

Recaptcha