



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
111 E. Kellogg Blvd., Ste. 105
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1256

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7621(MISS)

March 23, 2009

Minneapolis Planning Commission
c/o Jim Voll, Senior Planner
250 South 4th Street, Room 300
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

Dear Commissioners:

This letter concerns the matter of rezoning and conditional use permits for the proposed Bluff Street Development at 600 Main Street SE. The parcel at this address is located within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a unit of the national park system, and the coterminous Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area. The MNRRA was established by Congress in 1988 to protect and enhance the nationally significant historical, recreational, scenic, cultural, natural, economic, and scientific resources of the river corridor. The MNRRA Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) incorporates by reference the requirements of the state Critical Area Program, Shoreland Management Program, and other programs and plans that implement the plan's visions. Based on our review of the proposed actions, the National Parks Service (NPS) recommends denial of requests by Bluff Street Development LLC for rezoning, conditional use permits and variance, and site plan approval.

We note that the Marcy-Holmes Master Plan, adopted by the City of Minneapolis in 2003, identifies this triangle-shaped parcel as future parkland. NPS supports the use of this land as park and believes that its proposed development runs counter to established trail and open space goals. A central goal of the MNRRA CMP is to achieve a continuous trail and open space corridor along both sides of the Mississippi River through the entire 72-mile length of the national park. The NPS-facilitated Trail and Open Space Partnership (TOSP), of which the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board are key partners, has identified a future trail connection along this portion of the river as a high priority. Because of its proximity to the eastern terminus of the Stone Arch Bridge, this parcel also has the potential to serve, in part, as a gateway to the bridge and as a compliment to the adjacent Father Hennepin Bluffs Park. NPS is unable to support rezoning to Community Activity Center District (C3A), as such action would not serve to achieve well-established park and open space goals for this parcel. In addition to the potential loss of this parcel as future parkland, the National Park Service does not see a compelling reason to relax building height restrictions at this location and does not support a conditional use permit for a 68-foot building height within the Shoreland Overlay District.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed actions at 600 Main Street SE. We welcome the opportunity to partner with the city and other interested stakeholders in working to achieve MNRRA CMP and community goals for this parcel and other lands along the Mississippi

riverfront. If you have questions about our comments, please feel free to contact me or Jim Von Haden of my staff at 651-290-3030, ext. 235.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PL' followed by a horizontal line.

for

Paul Labovitz
Superintendent