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RE: Hennepin Avenue Redesign

December 20th, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing in support of the Hennepin Avenue redesign that will include safer spaces for pedestrians and everyone who uses Hennepin. Our office has been on Hennepin Avenue in Uptown since 2018 and we love being so close to restaurants, shopping, and the lakes. It makes running an errand during the workday or finding a place to meet for a business lunch easy.

Since there are so many options in the Uptown area, it's easy to walk to most places. Being in a walkable area is a huge plus for our company as we try to attract and retain the right employees to help us continue to grow (we were named among the 50 Fastest Growing Private Companies in Minnesota in 2019 and 2021, and we won a Tekne Award from MnTech in 2020). Bringing great people onboard as employees is a big part of why we're doing well, and part of why great people want to work for our company is because our headquarters is on Hennepin in Uptown. The recommended design is a huge upgrade to an already great area and would help our business (and other companies based in the area) to be more appealing to talented professionals.

I commute to the office from my home in Lynnhurst by car most days, but I avoid Hennepin when I can because it's so chaotic (people turning left when they shouldn't be, driving too fast for the area, or blocking traffic by parking in the bike lane between Lake Street and 31st are all common on Hennepin in the Uptown area). It's already much easier to get around Uptown on foot, I just wish it was safer. Expanding sidewalks will make it much easier to walk to a meeting next to a co-worker or vendor and narrowing the streets by adding bump outs and bike lanes will make it much safer to cross Hennepin.

While I do commute by bike some days, I would do it a lot more often if the protected bike lanes didn't stop at Hennepin Avenue. The painted bike lanes south of Lake on Hennepin have essentially been a joke to this point. Cars are constantly parked in them, forcing cyclists out into traffic. I travel to the Netherlands for business regularly, and the Dutch philosophy on bike lanes is that it should be safe for everyone between 8 and 80 years old to ride a bicycle. The recommended design has truly protected bike lanes, separated from traffic and safe enough for me to feel confident about our 14-year-old daughter riding her bike in them (we tell her to avoid the new painted bike lanes and use side streets instead because it's less dangerous).

We would be extremely disappointed if this redesign mirrored the poor design between Lake and 36th, where painted bike lanes turn into temporary parking spots and create chaos for anyone trying to bike or drive on Hennepin and where undersized sidewalks (other than between Lake and 31st) make walking side by side with someone difficult to do comfortably. As a small business owner with an office on Hennepin, I'm excited by the significant improvements the recommended design will bring and strongly encourage you to adopt it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Norton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Norton
President