

TESTIMONY CITY COUNCIL- South Park Blocks Master Plan-07.15.2021

My name is Robert Gelpke. I live at American Plaza in downtown, a mere 2 blocks from the park. I am here representing myself, my family, and close neighbors who have cherished this park for many, many years. It is one of those places that has been nice and consistent, and a touchstone when things needed to be centered.

When the City core was recently assaulted and defaced, the Park itself was only minimally attacked while maintaining its grandeur. All those big mature trees seemed to embrace those 'difficulties' and still guard our core City value of being beautiful and green.

Those 5 big rows of trees and two parallel walkways are welcome avenues for a broad array of family-centric community-based activities.

As I ponder all the information that is buzzing around in a cat fight furball, I ended up asking myself, what are we actually losing in the process. A big increase of hardscape replaces pathways, gardens, and grass. The introduction of evergreens will decrease the useable park footprint as their lower branches go all the way to the ground and block all activity. Those same evergreens would heavily shadow year-round. These things contribute to my overall assessment that the Plan is net subtractive.

The additive financial burden to the City also looks like money poorly invested when we're surrounded by far more important challenges.

Right now, especially during our ongoing societal turbulence, we all need a few things to remain constant, predictable, and peaceful. Let's not change the park, but do commit to nurturing and protecting what we already have. It is our City treasure and needs to be treated as such. It simply doesn't need 'fixing'.

Please vote no on the Plan

Thank you for your time and willingness to serve.

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