

## **AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR STREETS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF RONDO AND THE TWIN CITIES BOULEVARD INITIATIVE**

Board members and staff of Our Streets Minneapolis:

The Rondo Roundtable Partners are very troubled by misleading statements and overall tactics employed by Our Streets MPL. It should come as no surprise that the listed organizations have great trepidation about the motivations and intentions of your organization – as we were entirely ignored in the development process of your Twin Cities Boulevard Initiative. Our Streets has completely disregarded the fact that descendants and current residents of Rondo alike have been champions of the idea of a cap/land bridge over I-94 since 2009, when Our Streets was a bicycle coalition in Minneapolis. Please respect that reality.

More recently, we are increasingly concerned with how your organization negatively characterizes the work of ReConnect Rondo -- in your presentations, on social media and your website. In order to advance your own concepts, you attempt to take Rondo leadership down a notch – and that is simply uncalled for. You have implied that the leadership of ReConnect Rondo is not working in the interest of the Rondo community. In doing so, you have cast aspersions against and upon this collective in its pursuit to restore Rondo. This tone and approach are short-sited and harmful to the long-term interest of the Rondo community at large.

Our Streets should stand on the merits of its own idea, not attempt to advance itself by discrediting and undermining the work, credibility, hard-fought gains and leadership of ReConnect Rondo. Your actions are reminiscent of well-worn past historical practices – unilateral decisions to launch, drive and force decision-making on a community without the voice of owners who have lost property and business, without the voice of descendants who carry legacy impacts in their everyday lives and without speaking with the very organizations that have vigorously worked to assemble and re-stitch, as best possible the fabric of a community torn apart by the construction of I-94. Has nothing been learned?

For the first time in Minnesota history, African Americans now have the opportunity to lead – to determine its own destiny and to channel infrastructure and other investments – including and specifically Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program funding to right past wrongs – to truly help end racial disparities in the state and to move Minnesota by setting a better course for future generations through a model of self-determination.

Our Streets' recent actions unnecessarily impede all of that.

Members of Rondo Roundtable insist and request that you collaborate towards a higher purpose. Our partner organizations have coalesced to reignite an African American cultural enterprise district connected by a community land bridge. The land bridge is a means for attracting neighborhood-to-national restorative reinvestments and development for Rondo descendants and residents proximate to the enterprise district and for the region.

Our partner agency's effort with elected officials and jurisdictional leadership have secured \$6.2M for predevelopment activities, and has worked with Roundtable members, Xcel Energy and the City of St. Paul to attract \$1.5M in federal resources for a NetZero multi-use development prototype to evaluate potential scalable benefits when considering the community land bridge project. Now planning is under way to conduct:

- Anti-displacement & Innovative Overlay District

- Restorative Development Modeling
- Neighborhood Master Planning
- Environmental Impact Assessment & Analysis

Our Streets should be a staunch advocate for all of these initiatives, not a roadblock.

Together, these studies will help to identify and deploy best practices that insure a force-field of protection for neighborhood residents and the creation of a prosperity zone.

We do not accept that the Our Streets concept is in Rondo's best long-term interest. While we do embrace state, county and city climate change goals, we do not accept that your proposal is what is best to actualize them for African Americans or St. Paul residents and businesses. But our restorative development approach and master planning process will indeed review and provide quantifiable analysis of those benefits in our proposed community land bridge project.

Bottom line: For Rondo, this restorative movement must be led by African Americans – the stakes are too high for Rondo residents for us to ignore your recent behaviors, and we hope that you will hit pause to renew efforts together. A forthcoming meeting is being planned in which representatives of the Roundtable will discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Hallie Q. Brown Community Center  
Walker West Music Academy  
ReConnect Rondo  
Urban League Twin Cities  
Taste of Rondo Bar & Grill

Rondo Center of Diverse Expression  
Rondo Community Land Trust  
Golden Thymes Coffee & Café  
Model Cities  
SoulTouch Productions

Cc:

Mayor Melvin Carter – City of Saint Paul  
Chief Resilience Officer, Russ Stark – City of Saint Paul  
Public Works Director, Sean Kershaw – City of St. Paul  
Planning and Economic Development Director, Nicole Goodman – City of St. Paul  
Council Member, Dai Thao – City of Saint Paul Ward 1  
Council Member, Rebecca Noecker – City of St. Paul Ward 2  
Council Member, Chris Tolbert – City of St. Paul Ward 3  
Council Member Mitra Jalali – City of St. Paul Ward 4  
Council Member, Amy Brendmoen – City of St. Paul Ward 5  
Council Member, Nelsie Yang – City of St. Paul Ward 6  
Council Member, Jane Price – City of St. Paul Ward 7  
Commissioner, Chair, Luis Rangel Morales – City of St. Paul Planning Commission Ward 3  
Commissioner, Omar Syed – City of St. Paul Planning Commission Ward 1  
Commissioner, Garrison McMurtrey – City of St. Paul Planning Commission Ward 4  
Frogtown NA Planning Council Co-Director Caty Royce – City of St. Paul District 7  
Frogtown NA Planning Council Co-Director Tia Williams – City of St. Paul District 7  
Summit University Planning Council Executive Director, Jens Werner – City of St. Paul District 8  
Hamline Midway Planning Council Executive Director, Sarah O'Brien – City of St Paul District 11  
St. Anthony Community Council Executive Director, Katheryn Murray – City of St. Paul District

Union Park Planning Council Executive Director, Abdulrahman Wako – City of St. Paul District 13

Senator, Tina Smith – US Senate Representative Minnesota

Congresswoman Betty McCollum – US House Representative District MN 4

Commissioner, Toni Carter – Ramsey County District 4

Representative, Rena Moran – Minnesota House District 65A

Senator, Sandy Papas – Minnesota Senate District 65

Chair, Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council

Council Member, Kris Fredson – Metropolitan Council District 14

Commissioner, Nancy Daubenberger – Minnesota DOT

Assistant Commissioner, Jay Heiptas – Minnesota DOT District Operations

Assistant Commissioner, Chief Sustainability Officer, Tim Sexton – Minnesota DOT

District Engineer, Michael Barnes – Minnesota DOT Metro District

Assistant District Engineer, Sheila Kauppi – Minnesota DOT Metro District

Senator, Kaohly Vang Her – Minnesota Senate District 64A

Senator, Erin Murphy – Minnesota Senate District 64

Representative, Frank Hornstein – Minnesota House District 61A

Representative, Ruth Richardson – Minnesota House District 52B

Move Minnesota Executive Director Sam Rockwell – City of St. Paul

Move Minnesota Program Manager, Theresa Thompson Nix – City of St. Paul

Seward Neighborhood Group Interim Executive Director, Michael Jon Olsen

Lex-Ham Community Council Executive Director, Catherine Hinz – City of St. Paul

Prospect Park Association, Administrator Liza Davitch – City of St. Paul

St. Paul Chamber of Commerce President, B. Kyle – City of St. Paul

Midway Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Chad Kulas – City of St. Paul

The Alliance Executive Director Joo Hee Pumplun – City of Minneapolis

ReConnect Rondo, Board of Directors

Rondo Roundtable Partners

Mayor, Jacob Frey, City of Minneapolis

City Council Member, Andrea Jenkins – City of Minneapolis

Senior Policy Aide, Suzzanne Sobotka – City of Minneapolis

Move Minneapolis Executive Director, Tiffany Orth – City of Minneapolis