Ford site developer has chance to add 35 homes along St. Paul river boulevard

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Developer Ryan Cos. might be allowed to install 35 single-family homes along Mississippi River Boulevard on the Highland Park Ford site, after all.

The St. Paul City Council has set a public hearing April 3 on dozens of proposed amendments to the zoning and master plan that govern future development at the site of the former Twin Cities Ford auto plant.

“There are some cases where Ryan Companies’ (proposed) changes were more closely aligned with industry standards,” said St. Paul City Council Member Chris Tolbert, addressing the city council on Wednesday.

The developer’s proposed amendments range from technical tweaks to the more controversial question of whether the company should be allowed to build single-
The St. Paul Planning Commission recently voted against that request, noting that the master plan adopted by the city in 2017 calls for housing of two to six units.

On Wednesday, in anticipation of next week’s hearing, Tolbert presented three changes to recent Planning Commission recommendations, including the option of building single-family housing along Mississippi River Boulevard.

By a vote of 4-2, the city council then chose to adopt Tolbert’s three amendments, with Council President Amy Brendmoen, Jane Prince and Kassim Busuri joining him in the vote.

Council Members Rebecca Noecker and Mitra Nelson were opposed. Dai Thao was absent.

“I think that economically the market can support a variety of housing along the Mississippi River,” Nelson said.

Tolbert’s amendments also alter zoning in an area near the boulevard to follow the recommendations of Ryan Cos. and city staff, and double the maximum amount of non-residential parking allowed on site by altering floor-area ratios.

The council will likely hold a final vote on the proposed changes to the Ford site zoning and master plan in early-to-mid April.

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**Frederick Melo**

Frederick Melo was once sued by a reader for $2 million but kept on writing. He came to the Pioneer Press in 2005 and brings a testy East Coast attitude to St. Paul beat reporting. He spent nearly six years covering crime in the Dakota County courts before switching focus to the St. Paul mayor's office, city council, and all things neighborhood-related, from the
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