

August 14, 2019

Conclusion by Jenna Fletcher representing the Trust for Public Land:

“The area around the Garceau site is not in significant need of a park.”

Let's review the information Jenna used in coming to this conclusion. Since she is not here to speak for herself, I obviously do not know all the facts.

Go to the website provided in her e-mail. The website she uses for analyzes is provided by the Trust for Public Lands. If you go to their website it will say 79% of Vadnais Heights's residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. You will also see that 27% of Vadnais Heights's city land is used for parks and recreation (this is compared to a 15% national average).

If Jenna had made one more click and used the “Park Evaluator” tool she would have found, and remember this is the Trust for Public Lands own tool, that there are two areas in Vadnais Heights in RED (high need of a park). One of the areas is just south of Kohler Road and continues along County Road E. The closest available land, and land already owned by the City of Vadnais Heights (no purchase necessary), is Garceau Corner.

To be quite honest, I don't see the dire need for a park with playground equipment or where there are ball fields or tennis courts. Our focus should be on environmental conservation. Environmental conservation is about keeping the City of Vadnais Heights healthy so that both people and nature can thrive. A park/nature preserve with native plants and trees is beneficial to humans and natural habitat 365 days a year. It does not have to be occupied by people to be of benefit.

Problems I have with Jena's conclusion:

#1: Tied to what is pointed out above, the uniqueness and specific location was not taken into consideration. This land is located directly across from a lake. The area across from the lake makes perfect habitat for all sorts of wildlife. Habitat loss is probably the greatest threat to the variety of life on this planet today (World Wildlife Federation). If you don't believe the WWF, check your own sources. Read about biodiversity.

#2: The analysis does not take into consideration the type of park. 27% of Vadnais Heights's city land is used for parks and recreation. We are fortunate in that we have great, well maintained parks. I am even willing to admit that some of our smaller recreational areas may be under-utilized (casual observation) and not needed. So, what could possibly be wrong with this picture? The news lately is that more than 1 million species are being pushed to extinction. Think that it's not happening here? I would like to reference two recent articles in the Vadnais Press: “Time to save ourselves from ourselves” (June 19, 2019) and “Give me a home where butterflies roam” (July 31, 2019).

The wildflower garden in front of City Hall is very nice, but why not expand on this concept? Garceau Corner could be turned into a wildlife area with native gasses, flowers (pollinators) and trees (to clean our air). The area could include a walking path (not paved) and could even be utilized as a sculpture garden or veterans' park.

#3: The analysis provided by the Jenna does not take into consideration the destruction of trees and grassland that is occurring approximately 2 miles up the street. Fact is she probably does not know about that. Why is it important? Because one of the main causes of habitat loss is land conversion for development. The conversion of Garceau Corner to green space would provide a little offset. Obviously, three acres of green landscape (considering all buildings and blacktop is removed) is not going to compensate for the destruction of habitat

caused by two 70-unit apartment buildings. In approving these apartments, I am sure that the City did its due diligence in offering mitigation solutions to protect the environment. There were probably no protected species harmed, but what happened to the other displaced wildlife? All the animals we see when we look out our window every day? Our own survival depends on a healthy ecosystem, which cannot happen without wildlife—from bees and other pollinators, to birds, to mammals and turtles—we need them all.

#4: The analysis does not take into consideration the people of Vadnais Heights. Look at the POLCO survey that asks “What areas would you like to see the community improve in?” Most comments have to do with trails, preservation of nature, green space, walkability and enhanced parks. In fairness the POLCO survey has a small sample size (only 24 comments), but is strongly supported by the 2016 Morris Leatherman survey where 74% of the people surveyed either strongly supported or somewhat supported (even if it meant increasing taxes and/or fees) the expansion of trails and sidewalks. The Garceau Corner could tie in with the Vadnais Lake/Sucker Lake Regional Park. According to the Morris Leatherman survey “Sixty-six percent report household members visited the Vadnais Lake/Sucker Lake Regional Park. Eighty-two percent of visitors reported walking there. The Garceau Corner could provide the perfect connection.

#5: How much does Jenna know about the history of Vadnais Heights? From Vadnais Heights website (click to history): *“Vadnais Lake, an important scenic and natural area that has remained undeveloped...”* It bothers me that someone, who appears to have focused on one data point, can say unequivocally that “The area around the Garceau site is not in significant need of park.”

I have respect for the Trust for Public Land because their mission is in line with the way things should be. From the Trust for Public Land website: “We don’t just save land—we save land for people to enjoy...” Pretty much in line with my way of thinking. Their mission is to create parks and protect land for people ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Same as what I want.

Andrian Benepe is senior vice president for the Trust for Public Land, Benepe points to how green space helps the ecosystem. *“When I see a tree, I see a work of God because a tree is a remarkable machine. It does extraordinary things in exchange for very little.”* Knowing all the circumstances I wonder what he would think about Jenna’s opinion?

I need to also say something about Jenna’s last sentence, “Generally parks lead to increase the value of single-family homes in the range of 3-15%, with the most value for homes within the first 500 feet.” Gee, I hope this is true. I live on land that is near contaminated land and infested with termites. My neighbors and I have already spent thousands of dollars on house repairs and pest control (which continues to this day). It would be nice to recover some of these costs. I should make it clear that the City did not bring the termites. Termites were there when the city bought the land. I would like to know if the city knew about the termite problem at the time of purchase? And now that the city owns this land, what is being done to resolve this problem?

To tell you the truth until Jenna made the statement, pointing out the possible increase in property value, the thought never entered my mind. The discussions in our backyard revolve around how our flowers are growing, about the trees, the safety of the twin deer fawns that are roaming the neighborhood, the chirping of the birds, and quiet nights and what would be the best use of Garceau Corner. Property values are not at the top of our list.

Ronald J. Garceau



ParkServe®

example: Seattle WA



Help Menu Home



Help X

Park Need

- Very High
- High
- Moderate

Optimized Points

Optimized points are suggested locations for a new park, ranked based on the estimated increase of residents served within a 10-minute walk of a park. Circle encompasses a 1/4 mile radius.

Use ParkEvaluator®
 ParkEvaluator® User Manual



Are we missing a park in your community? Tell!

[Vadnais Heights, MN - City Level Report](#)

Jamie Becker-Finn
State Representative
Assistant Majority Leader
District 42B
Ramsey County



Minnesota House of Representatives

July 12, 2019

Ronald Garceau
3453 Centerville Rd
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127-7123

Dear Ronald,

Thank you for contacting me about setting aside more green space in the City of Vadnais Heights. As the Vice-Chair of the House Environmental & Natural Resources Policy Committee, I appreciate your advocacy for this issue.

I forwarded your e-mail to the League of Minnesota Cities, the Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED), and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to see what funds might be available to the city for such a purpose. Here is what I found:

Craig Johnson from the League of Minnesota Cities replied: "Briefly, funds for greenspace redevelopment are pretty rare and tend to be tied to involvement with other state programs like the Pollution Control Agency's Voluntary Cleanup Program. Most other programs require that the property increase in taxable value to be eligible. This link (<https://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/cleanup/cleanuprevolvingloanprogram.jsp>) shows the programs through the Department of Employment and Economic Development that are available to local government for site cleanup and redevelopment. The Cleanup Revolving Loan Program is the best bet, but I don't know if the site is qualified to use it or what funds it has available. Your best bet would be to check with DEED on what options they feel are available."

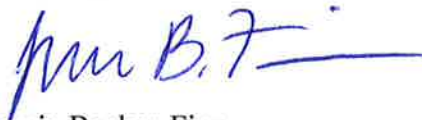
Darielle Dannen from DEED responded: "It is possible that the Cleanup Revolving Loan Program could be used for these purposes. You are welcome to discuss this project with the program's manager Kristin Lukes or 651-259-7451 to see if it will meet your needs."

Annalee Garletz from the DNR replied: "I inquired with our Parks and Trails Grants staff about your question and gathered the following information. Outdoor Recreation Grants provide 50% matching grants to acquire, develop, and redevelop local parks. This is a competitive grant program where only 1 in 3 applications are able to be funded given the limited available grant dollars. When the applications are ranked, goals from Minnesota's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) are used. Environmental remediation, while important, is not a primary SCORP goal. The City of Vadnais Heights may wish to consider applying for a grant to develop a new park at this location. However, if the application includes significant costs for environmental remediation, it may not meet all the goals of the grant program. More information about the Outdoor Recreation Grant

Program is available at: https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html. If you have more questions about the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, you could refer them to Audrey Mularie, the DNR staff who oversees Community Development Grants for the region that Vadnais Heights is located in. She can be reached at 651-259-5549, or via email at Audrey.mularie@state.mn.us.”

I encourage you to work with the City to explore these funding options. Thank you again, and please always feel free to contact me whenever I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamie B. Finn", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jamie Becker-Finn
State Representative

Search...



Brownfields

Brownfields are abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial properties where financing expansion or redevelopment is complicated by actual or suspected environmental contamination.

By investigating and cleaning up brownfield sites, many of which are blighted properties in inner-city areas, redevelopment can take place without fear of risk to human health or potential environmental liabilities. This benefits Minnesota communities by reducing urban sprawl, enhancing the livability of neighborhoods, and creating new businesses, jobs, and an improved tax base.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Brownfield Program was created to help enable the sale and redevelopment of brownfield sites.


Brownfield Program services

The MPCA Brownfield Program is a fee-for-service program that provides technical assistance and issuance of various liability assurance letters to promote the investigation, cleanup, and redevelopment of property that is contaminated with petroleum and/or hazardous substances. Customers include property owners, prospective purchasers, developers, development agencies, lending institutions, non-profit organizations, and local units of government.

-  [Brownfield Program Services](#)

To apply for help

To enroll in the Brownfield or Voluntary Remediation Program, use **MPCA's e-Services**.

Get started with e-Services. If you do not already have an account to use any of the MPCA's e-Services:  [Getting started with MPCA e-Services](#)

Along with your application, please include a one-page cover letter that summarizes your request. Include all known MPCA ID#s associated to the site, and tell us if the request is grant

related. Reference the cover letter as a 'Phase I update' and submit with your application.

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I ESA) must be submitted with the application, unless desired services are limited to a VIC Lender Letter or certain petroleum-related services, such as expedited review of a petroleum tank release site, Tank Removal Verification Letter, and/or General Liability Letter. The Phase I ESA must be prepared in accordance with the All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) standard as per 40 C.F.R. Part 312 and must be no older than one year. In some cases, with MPCA staff concurrence, an older Phase I ESA can be submitted with a Phase I ESA update. The MPCA will not process the application if a required Phase I is omitted.

Subsequent Submittals at Active Brownfield or Voluntary Superfund projects. If you are submitting reports, information, or requests at an active Brownfield or Voluntary Superfund project, do NOT submit via the MPCA's e-service. Send the document(s) directly to the MPCA project manager(s) assigned to the project. You must include the current MPCA Billing ID and or BF/SF ID in the subject line of the email submittal. Failure to submit documents to the current project manager(s) or to include a site ID in the subject line may result in delays.

Cleanup guidance for brownfield redevelopment projects

- [Guidance documents and forms for brownfield redevelopment projects](#)

About brownfield sites

Search for contaminated sites

To search for contaminated sites that are or have been addressed by MPCA's cleanup programs, go to the [Contaminated sites webpage](#).

Request specific information from brownfield project files

To request information about a specific brownfield project, please complete an [information request form](#). Any questions about information requests may be directed to the [MPCA Records Management staff](#), or call 651-757-2728 or 1-844-828-0942.

Response actions and institutional controls

- [Response actions completed in FY2017 \(c-vic2-08\)](#)
- [Response actions planned for FY2018 \(c-vic2-09\)](#)
- [Remediation sites with institutional controls as of January 15, 2018 \(c-vic2-10\)](#)
- [Remediation sites with institutional controls as of January 15, 2018 \(c-vic2-10\)](#)

To stay informed about MPCA cleanup related issues and activities, sign up for emails through GovDelivery.



Contaminated sites

You can search for contaminated sites that are or have been addressed by MPCA's cleanup programs.

- What's In My Neighborhood?