

April 30, 2015

Chairperson Gavis Nelson
St. Paul Zoning Committee
City Hall
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Rezoning of the Old Convert Building at 5TH and Mendota Sts.
For Freedom Works, Inc.

Dear Chairperson Gavis Nelson:

My name is James Hayne and I am opposed to the rezoning of the old Sacred Heart Church convent building at 5TH and Mendota Sts., now owned by Catholic Charities, for Freedom Works, Inc. I have been a parishioner at Sacred Heart Church for 63 years and am the 5th generation of my father's family to attend Sacred Heart Church.

Sacred Heart Church has been a welcome, stabilizing force in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood for 134 years. SHC currently provides spiritual ministry for 1000 parishioners plus visitors every weekend. SHC also provide religious education classes for 100 children every week.

Sacred Heart Church relies heavily on the income received from renting their school building. The current tenant, Twin Cities Academy, is a charter school providing high quality elementary and high school education to several hundred St. Paul children. They have been recognized for excellence on the local and national level. Without the rental income from the school, Sacred Heart Church could not continue to operate.

Freedom Works, Inc. has asked for a zoning variance for the old convent. They would like to use the 24 bedroom convent space as transitional housing for 24 male felons exiting prison. Freedom Works, Inc. says the average stay for a felon is 9 months. This means that 48 different male felons will live the property each year.

Freedom Works, Inc. will also hold weekly meetings for felons. I have been told that 100 or more will attend each week but have not verified that number. Freedom Works, Inc.'s web site says their recidivism rate is 8%. This means each year 8% of the 48 male felons will commit a crime. In terms of residents, this means that, on average, four new residents of FWI will commit a crime each year.

The old convent residence property is 30 feet from Sacred Heart Church's school building. This building not only provides much needed income for SHC it also provides other classrooms used to instruct children in the faith. These 100 children attend classes in the school building every week.

Twin Cities Academy sent a letter to Dayton's Bluff District Council stating their opposition to Freedom Works Inc. operating transitional housing for male felons in the old convent building. The convert

property is 30 feet from the school property. The letter was signed by the principal and two board members. They stated in their letter that parents of their students oppose the Freedom Works, Inc. locating their transitional housing for male felons so close to the school. Parents said they would not send their children to Twin cities Academy if the zoning variance was granted to Freedom Works, Inc.

Currently Sacred Heart Church has the option of renting their school to another school or to a business. Freedom Works, Inc.'s transitional housing for male felons eliminates the option of renting the school building to another school. This option is SHC's preferred use for the building. It is also SHC's primary source of potential tenants.

Parishioners will not send their 100 children to weekly religious education classes if Freedom Works Inc. is granted the zoning variance. Sacred Heart Church will lose parishioners because of Freedom Works, Inc. use of the convent as transitional housing for male felons.

We have laws limiting how close to a school a bill board ad for cigarettes can be located. We have laws limiting how close to a school a bar can be located. We have these laws to protect our children. Locating transitional housing for male felons 30 feet from a school is not adequate protection for our children. Parents of the school children have stated this very clearly.

Dayton's Bluff has many sober houses and transitional housing units for males struggling to obey the law. Crowding too many such places too close together does not help the recovery process.

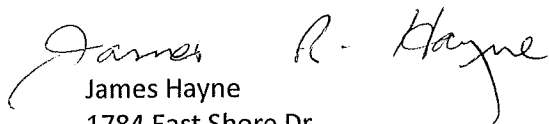
Sacred Heart Church should not have their only income producing asset compromised. Unfortunately, by parents stating that they will not send their children to school at the Sacred Heart school building that is what will happen if the zoning variance is granted. Compromising Sacred Heart Church's income source is not right.

To diminish the income producing ability of Sacred Heart Church's asset, the school building, by granting a variance, an exception, for Freedom Works, Inc. is not right. Housing a large number of felons 30 feet from a school for elementary and high school students is not right.

I would also like to point out that Catholic Charities was granted a parking easement by Sacred Heart Church when they purchased the convent property. The easement states that it will transfer to a successor of Catholic Charities. It does not say that it will transfer upon a sale of the property. A successor would be a new Catholic organization taking the place of Catholic Charities. A sale to an unrelated party such as Freedom Works, Inc. does not fit this requirement.

Please give your thoughtful consideration to denying the requested zoning variance for the convent property to Freedom Works, Inc. Thank You.

Sincerely,



James Hayne
1784 East Shore Dr.
Maplewood, MN 55109, Cell: 651-285-4044

April 30, 2015

Re: Freedom Works file #15-021-950

This is a request that the conditional use permit for a transitional housing facility for up to 24 residents with modification of required lot area be denied for the reasons stated below.

In addition to meeting all conditions listed under a specific use, there are general conditions that Freedom Works conditional use permit fails. All Conditional Use Permits must meet the following conditions:

1. The extent, location and intensity of the use will be in substantial compliance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council.
2. The use will provide adequate ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.
3. The use will not be detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety and general welfare.
4. The use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.
5. The use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

Freedom works conditional use permit fails on all 5 conditions and if they fail on only one of these conditions the request should be denied.

1. The extent, location and intensity of the use **IS NOT** in substantial compliance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan and any applicable subarea plans which were approved by the city council.

RM1 Multiple Family All RT2 uses Multiple-family dwelling (≤3 stories) Rooming and boarding house* RM2 Multiple Family All RM1 uses Multiple-family dwelling (≤5 stories) Nursing home* Accessory retail service and office uses* Elderly housing support services

This is not RM2 business, but commercial or business district maybe community business zoning in residential area. This is 24 people paying rent and sharing a kitchen is my understanding.

Community business- "Community residential facility* "
General Business- "Hotel, inn, motel"

I think there should be some concern Freedom Works application is not adequately defined. It seems the approach is throw paint on wall to see what will stick and we will call it that to get through zoning. ¹ As explained below this really isn't a transitional housing facility as Freedom Works states. It is also not licensed correctional Community Residential Facility.

¹ Please see letter from Bill Dermody to zoning committee dated April 29, 2015.

§65.159. Transitional housing facility.

One (1) main building, or portion thereof, on one (1) zoning lot where **persons who may or may not have access to traditional or permanent housing but are capable of living independently** within a reasonable period of time, generally about eighteen (18) months, reside on a 24-hour-per-day basis for at least thirty (30) days and participate in appropriate program activities designed to facilitate independent living.

It's been presented this is a transitional housing, however it does not fit the requirements of this category. The residents do not reside on a 24 hour per day basis for at least 30 days and participate in appropriate program activities designated to facilitate independent living. Nothing states they must stay 24 hours for 30 days. Also under this category there is not enough parking spaces as discussed later nor the required lot area is it almost 10,000 sq. ft. short (9,315 sq. ft.). Are we trying to fit a square in a round hole.

§65.171. Rooming house.

- (1) Any residential structure or dwelling unit, supervised or not, which provides living and sleeping arrangements for more than four (4) unrelated individuals for periods of one (1) week or longer; or
- (2) Any residential structure or dwelling unit which provides **single room occupancy (SRO)** housing as defined in CFR section 882.102 to more than four (4) unrelated individuals; or
- (3) Any building housing more than four (4) unrelated individuals which has any of the following characteristics shall be considered and regulated as a rooming house:
 - a. Rental arrangements are by the rooming unit rather than the dwelling unit.
 - b. Rooming unit doors are equipped with outer door locks or chains which require different keys to gain entrance.**
 - c. Kitchen facilities may be provided for joint or common use by the occupants of more than one (1) rooming unit.**
 - d. Rooming units are equipped with telephones having exclusive phone numbers.
 - e. Rooming units are equipped with individual intercom security devices.
 - f. Each rooming unit has a separate assigned mailbox or mailbox compartment for receipt of U.S. mail.

I do not believe this is being considered what Freedom Works will operate as.

Land use chapter of Comprehensive plan designates the site-Established Neighborhoods. Established Neighborhoods are characterized almost entirely by single-family houses and duplexes, as well as scattered small scale multi-family housing. Commercial areas at the intersections of arterial or collector streets provide goods and services for residents of the immediate neighborhood. There is medium density housing along Residential Corridors that run through Established Neighborhoods. Does a 24 resident transitional housing fit the plan for established neighborhood.

The housing chapter states under Preservation of Existing, Stable Neighborhoods "2.1. Maintain the vitality and high quality of life in existing stable neighborhoods by engaging in a variety of actions." Another concern is the affect this housing choice has on the value of homes. Further research should be done to see if the value of homes will be diminished further. Dayton Bluff was hit hard during recession and home prices in this area may have steadily increased, however, will this land choice promote this progression upward.

2. The use **will NOT** provide adequate ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.

Where do the 24 residents park. It mentioned "approximately 25'-wide by 98'-long paved area was added along building west side, this paved area has room for 4 legally sized parking spaces' in parallel arrangement if vehicles are permitted to back into the alley or a turnaround is provided or could be stripped two parking places" Backing up into the alley **will impede traffic** and the flow of the street. Waiting for cars to leave before another is able to park will impede traffic and create congestion. A school is right next to this parking area where students sit outside and this is a very small area that has the traffic of school and church as well as a resident's home with parking. Further research should be done to see if this is even a functional or possible location for parking. Having driven in this space it is difficult to maneuver out of space without going onto the grass of the school and would be even harder with other cars parked next to you. A turnaround may be provided is also mentioned this may require further concession of zoning department to allow. Has Freedom Works indicated they would pay for this or who will provide this turnaround.

One element not discussed is what about visitors. Does Freedom Works not permit any visitors and if they do where will they park. Is there designated days of visiting that will create traffic congestion. How about the volunteers that run the program they presumably will drive cars, where will they park. A building this size and with this many residents has parking codes because there is a reason for them to prevent traffic congestion and allow ingress and egress. Especially in the winter and with St. Paul enforcement of parking on the street for snow plowing this will affect neighbors when have potentially 24 residence, volunteers, staff, and visitors trying find parking.

Backing into an alley as the only way to provide still inadequate parking will create traffic congestion.

Finally resident at some point in program can get cars. If even $\frac{1}{2}$ of the residents advance in program and have cars that will require another 12 more spaces $24 / 2 = 12$. The goal of transitional housing I would image is to advance in the program so they can have their own vehicle.

It should be further researched whether the easement was abandoned and will not transfer with property. Even with the easement there is inadequate parking, without easement there not enough spaces for 24 residence, staff volunteers, and visitors.

The Zoning Code currently mirrors this state statute by specifying over 16 residents as the point at which certain residential facilities must meet additional standards. For example, for community residential facilities licensed by the State Department of Human Services, any facility occupied by 17 or more residents must have a minimum lot area of 5,000 square feet plus 1,000 square feet for each guest room in excess of two guest rooms.

This facility does not meet the zoning code lot size by almost 10,000 sq. ft. this is a substantial amount. There are valid and justified reasons to require lot size restriction especially when having this many residents, 24 not including staff. There are justified reasons to require that much space for that many residents.

3. The use **Will be** detrimental to the existing character of the development in the immediate neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety and general welfare.

Currently there is a school and active church located right next to property. The Twin City Academy brought concerns to the zoning board relating to 250 students school being located next to residents. The Sacred Heart Church also brought concerns on how they will get renters if and when the current school leaves. A question becomes who would run a school next to transitional housing which every year 24 new residents will be living. The current school objection indicates other schools will have these reservations. Also future parents of the students at the school will have reservations and concerns about sending their child to this location which is shown by current school letter requesting denial of conditional use.² No adequate answer has been provided on how allowing this nonconforming use will Not be detrimental and effect existing character of neighborhood and development. However, there is evidence it will disrupt the character of the neighborhood now by affecting current makeup of the area and future health, safety and general welfare of the area. Logic indicates it will be difficult to rent this space as a school, and further research should be done to see if this is true. If the school cannot be rented the church has indicated concerns about having enough funds to stay operational. Allowing this nonconforming use may create more vacant properties in St. Paul not based on conjure but statements of the residents. If this cannot be rented as a school what other group could use this building or would and would that be promoting the goals of St. Paul to provide adequate education.

How many group homes are in Dayton Bluff and adding another facility will add 24 transitional housing residents in the residential area. Concentration of transitional housing residents already in area is a valid concern for the city of St. Paul and the neighbors. The rules require transitional housing away from each other at least 1400 feet here would be allowing to close. A lot with this size should only hold 14 residence if you allow the conditional use permit you are allowing 10 more residents, this is the equivalent of another transitional housing facility being placed. Also as other letters has brought up this does not account for halfway houses or group homes that house under 4 people. There are a few of those facility on the same block and within blocks of the unit.

In meeting at Dayton bluff District Council a community member who runs halfway houses asked how Freedom Works could maintain safety and answer was they could not.³

² Please see Twin cities Academy letter attached.

³ Please review Freedom works community mtg.

4. The use **Will** impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

Neighbors are concerned.⁴ Likely there will be two vacant building next to it, a church and a school. The layout of the school only functions as a school. I think further research should be done on how many transitional housing that hold 24 transitional residents living in them are permitted as conditional use next to a school. This could impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the area. The school located close to the property now brought an objection. This indicates future schools will also have objections. This type of use has not been permitted in this residential area before evidence by denial of condition use request to Victory through Faith, file #06-292-216 was denied.

A property of this size housing 24 residence on this property is likely to impede normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property. I think further study is needed to find out if investment will be stagnated in this area.

This condition is not met. The building originally constructed as a Covent for about 24 nuns who were associated with the adjacent church and school. This would have had very little impact on the character of development in the area, and would not endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare. The next use was a residential facility for 20 volunteer taking part in Catholic Charities programs, there purpose was to volunteer in community and they would therefore have been a benefit to surrounding area.

Similar to denial in Zone file 06-292216 there will be a significant increase in intensity of use and will result in a large number of coming and going from this property, including staff which will not be staying on property but leaving as well as residents arriving and leaving as they go to work, school, and other activities, which can impact the character of development in the immediate neighborhood. This is not case where 24 nuns as first use would likely being at church in close vicinity nor the case of 20 volunteers which is less people then requested. Freedom Works did say would have BBQ and assist with clean up, but this is not there goal as was catholic charities volunteer housing.

In addition, the residence of the facility will be changing every 6-12 months, this based on the goals of transitional housing, it's a transition to permeants housing, there will be necessary turn over quickly and the residents are unlikely to develop ties to the surrounding community.

5. The use **Will not** in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

This condition is not met. The parking requirement for community residential facilities is 1 space per 2 facility residences.

No parking variance was requested as should have been because with use requested there is not sufficient parking. Freedom works may be drastically underestimating parking spaces required They say most residence will not have vehicles however, they are able to obtain a vehicle after

⁴ This evidence by letters sent in even with short notice

some time . If even 1/3 of the residents get vehicles with staff vehicles there will be major parking problem. Also no mention of visitor parking or parking for counselors or volunteers.

This will affect use and enjoyment of neighbors to find parking especially in the winter.

Further the lot size is not in conformity and should only house 14 residents not 24.

Finally this is not in conformity with general goals of comprehensive plan to promote development, housing stock rehabilitation providing education.

6 The Planning Commission may impose such reasonable conditions and limitations in granting an approval as are determined to be necessary to fulfill the spirit and purpose of the zoning code and to protect adjacent properties.

Conditions may be modified by the Planning Commission when strict application of such conditions would unreasonably limit or prevent the otherwise lawful use of a piece of property or an existing structure and would result in exceptional undue hardship to the owner of such property or structure; provided, that such modification will not impair the intent and purpose of such condition and is consistent with health, morals and general welfare of the community and is consistent with reasonable enjoyment of adjacent property. 14 rooms could be used on this site and will not cause owner hardship. Freedom works states there will not be an obvious adverse effects because before 20 and 24 stayed there. As mentioned when at max house 24 were connected to church and theoretically travel was from church and sleeping area at the property. While freedom works would have 24 staying at location plus staff which is too many people for the lot size. The inside courtyard will be insufficient and where will residents congregate outside at.

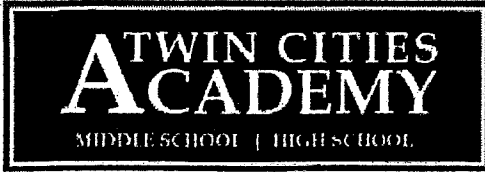
Further this area has changed when fist designed and housed 24 nuns so long ago more transitional housing and halfway houses are in this area and multi-family houses adding to amount of people living in close proximity.

Strict application of the lot area requirement would not be unreasonable. They could use 14 of the rooms which would substantially help with overcrowding of the lot and this would not affect their mission. Also this is not a request of strict application where lot size is 1,000 sq. ft. too small or even 5,000 sq. ft., but almost 10,000 sq. ft. too small for the use requested. There is not exceptional undue hardship to owner as listed above they could still use substantial amount of rooms.

The modification will impair the intent and purpose of the condition, which is to ensure there is adequate open space areas onsite for the use of the residents. The modification would also be inconsistent with health, morals, and general welfare of the community and be inconsistent with reasonable enjoyment of adjacent property due to the increased number of residence that would predominately be located on property. The residents stay on property 24 hrs. A day besides leaving for work.

This request for denial provides reasonable factual basis to determine that the proposed use would injure the surrounding neighborhood or otherwise harm the public health, safety, and welfare. Freedom works does not provide a factual bases, but speculates and does not provide evidence to support how adding 24 residence will not injure surrounding neighborhood or otherwise harm the public health and safety and welfare. Freedom works does not justify request of the modification of lot size which should only house 14 residence. And Freedom works does not request a variance for parking, and again provides speculation on how many spaces will be needed, but does not address the full need of parking for the use they are requesting.

Based on above information, the conditional use permit for a transitional housing facility for up to 24 residents with modifications of required lot area should be denied.



835 East Fifth Street
St. Paul, MN 55106

April 23, 2015

RE: Freedom Works

Planning Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion related to the Special Condition Use Permit Application of Freedom Works, for a building located at 869 5th Street East. This building is the former convent for Sacred Heart parish

We are the board chairs and principal of Twin Cities Academy Middle School and Twin Cities Academy High School, which is housed at 835 5th Street East, in the former Sacred Heart Elementary School building. TCA and TCAHS have been tenants of the Sacred Heart parish for six years. Our building is approximately 30 feet away from the structure at 869 5th Street East, where Freedom Works hopes to offer a 24-bed facility as a part of their program.

Last week, two members of our board had the opportunity to attend a quickly-organized meeting hosted by the Dayton's Bluff Community Council to learn a bit more about Freedom Works as an organization. We wholeheartedly support the mission of helping the recently incarcerated, who meet their qualifications, to ease their way back into society and develop new daily rituals, and make a new life for themselves.

As a board, we have, of course, also been listening to the voices of many in our school community and in our surrounding neighborhood who are quite concerned about the organization. Of course, parents are concerned primarily about the safety of their children at TCA/TCAHS. We educate students from grades 6-12, which is when they are at their most vulnerable stages of development with regard to sound decision-making. Many parents are concerned that adding a post-prison element to this already challenged neighborhood in such close proximity would not serve our student population.

Concerns about the timeline of this Conditional Use Permit application have also been raised, as it's seemed to be on the fast-track for approval from both the Dayton's Bluff Community Council and the City of Saint Paul.

TCA and TCAHS are considering a move in the near future. In reality, this change may not affect our student population for long. However, as good community members we know the uphill challenge that Sacred Heart parish would face in trying to rent this building in the future, if Freedom Works is allowed to expand their operations. It is in this sense of community that we must register our disapproval to this application.

Thank you for your time and commitment to this process.

Respectfully,


Betsy Luedt
Principal


Christine Rider
TCA Board Chair


Gary Jader
TCAHS Board Chair

Freedom Works Community mtg

Monday, April 27, 2015

7:03 PM

- **Sage:** opened with a review of the process leading to zoning commission postponement on FW permit
- **Survey of attendees:** About half live within 4 blocks, about half live outside of that 4 block area but still in DB. About 47 community people, about 5/6 from FW
- **Officials in attendance:** Council member Finney's aide Ellen Biales, Cmdr Lazoya, Rep. Sheldon Johnson
- **George Lang FW Ex Dir describes FW:** post prison ministry, help men who don't want to get the same results as what got them to prison. Offer relationships, Christ centered relationships, offer bible study, career preparation. Residential facility in No Mpls has 15 guys, Wayzata program for 4 guys (not good busing to get guys to construction jobs etc, 80% don't have driver's license, many can't afford car)
- **Q: Why this convent?: A:** Bob Johnston, chairman of the FW board - 24 rooms each with a sink, fits the model of the program, also has other program spaces and office spaces available.
- **Q: How will facility operate as neighbor? A:** George has brought an article and reference letters. Program is about building community in program, also about service to community
- **Q: Who is funding this? A:** No state or federal funds, funding is by individuals, church partners, grants. Program is in a strong position today.
- **Q: Is there an exit plan if there is not staff/funding to keep it safe? A:** Several staff described including 24 hour/day intake manager, also volunteers. No exit plan if program closes or fails because currently program is strong. 3 mentors per client. If program participant isn't a fit there is plan to get them to a collaborative program. Not set up to deal with mental health issues so send clients with those to collaborative program.
- **Q: Is your mission to proselytize in the neighborhood or just within the program, how can a prayer/faith based program really help? A:** Guys have to work the plan, show results. FW will not be witnessing to community.
- **Q: What will program do to property values nearby? A:** Bob - I don't know? 55106 has 3rd highest population of returning felons after No. Mpls, and Phillips neighborhood. Cmdr Lazoya - crime is dropping on East side since Jan 2014.
- **Q: What are benefits to community? A:** Weekly community outreach, pick up trash, do lawns, shovel, serve coffee, pray with people, barbeques, events for 1300-2000 people in Mpls.
- **Sacred Heart - concern** for 100 students in religious school each week. Worried about people in recovery being around these children, do people not in recovery visit residents? **FW Response:** No. Mpls has daycare next door which sent letter of reference. Ministry is against people not in recovery visiting guys in recovery, not allowed. Less than 7% recidivism rate.
- **Q: What kind of criminals are allowed? A:** Work with guys for 6 mo before release, long referral, no sex offenders. They are property offenders.
- **Sheldon** - concentration of halfway houses, services for people in need is a concern in this neighborhood.
- **Cliff** - we have more than our fair share. It's not about Not In My Back Yard, it's already here. We carry more than our fair share of the burden.
- **Karen** - Concern for Sacred Heart that TCA is leaving and will be hard to replace them with another quality school. TCA has attracted quality people to the community. Not sure this program will contribute to community in same way. **FW response:** Can't say for sure that it will be problem.

- **Concern** that men aren't getting good training. Could they get training in various types of repairs on community homes to give back to community - electrical, masonry, carpentry? Building community would literally be by physically building/rebuilding in the community in a visual way that we can see. **Response:** FW is open and willing to consider this type of thing.
- **Q:** What is appeal process? **A:** Zoning committee will make decision at next mtg, make recommendation to Planning Commission who usually follows recommendation. Someone could appeal to city council that planning commission acted in error and then there would be another public hearing. There is a fee to file appeal.
- **Q:** What does FW look for when looking for a program location? **A:** FW would like to comply with zoning. Also consider: Functionality of facility. Cost of facility. Location - nicer areas are too expensive and have no transit to work options for clients. Some renovation needed but not extensive because layout fits program.
- **Q:** Do all residents come directly from prison? **A:** Some come from corrections, county jail, long term treatment, some come who have gotten out and realize they need support.
- **Deanna** - Love the idea of the advisory committee, council could help facilitate. Fully intend to help Sacred Heart fill their space. Enterprise center has lots of contact with businesses looking for spaces.

Quick survey of the attendees:

How many would be open to FW coming? 11

How many are firmly against FW coming? 11

How many are not sure how they feel about FW? 5

*This may include FW attendants
There were 4 from FW who raise
hand in support maybe more*

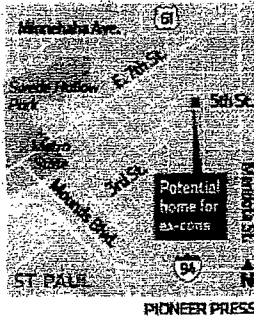
Faith-based program to help ex-cons runs into Dayton's Bluff resistance

Updated: 04/28/2015 08:03:25 AM CDT

TwinCities.com

Location, location...

A Minneapolis residential program for ex-cons is looking to expand into St. Paul -- causing some friction with potential neighbors.



A faith-based residency program for ex-cons attempting to restart their lives has been searching for a little good will toward its men, in the form of a new home in an old Dayton's Bluff convent.

But while their current next-door neighbors praise them, North Minneapolis-based Freedom Works has been taking fire from the St. Paul residents they're attempting to court as new ones.

In past weeks, the convent at 869 E. Fifth St. has been littered with posters and -- at one point -- a banner, declaring "Beware, Felons are Coming."

And officials from the school next door say they'd rather the ex-cons look for a different home.

"The organization is a very worthy cause; it's just the geographical location, in sight of our students, that's a concern," said Betsy Lueth, principal of Twin Cities Academy, a 450-student middle and high school adjacent to the convent. "Even seeing them smoking cigarettes, that kind of violates what we're trying to achieve here."

"I get it; I get the school's fear. But that ZIP code has felons -- the only difference between ours and theirs is ours aren't committing crimes," said George Lang, executive director of Freedom Works.

This week, school officials sent a letter to the city's zoning board -- which meets at the end of the month -- urging them to deny Freedom Works' request to use the building.

But neighbors of the organization's North Minneapolis residence building in the 3500 block of Penn Avenue, which houses up to 15 people, praised it for community involvement they saw as otherwise lacking.

"We've never had any issue at all. They have barbecues, music, they invite everybody. It's pretty good, them being involved in this neighborhood like they are," said Edith Toins, who owns and runs We Care Childcare, a day care facility next door to the residence.

Mahmoud Salem, who owns a Quick Stop convenience store across the street, said, "They've been very good neighbors. I don't remember anybody complaining or having problems. It's a very controlled environment; they have a curfew."

In St. Paul, the nearby school hosted a forum earlier this month for neighbors to meet Freedom Works' staff and clientele. About 100 people turned up -- a good portion of them from Freedom Works.

Several would-be neighbors stood and voiced concerns over safety, noted Brenda Reid, a staff member at Dayton's Bluff Community Council who attended the meeting.

An Academy parent worried about the fate of her daughter walking to school; a foster mother across the street had similar concerns about her kids.

The 13,000-square-foot brick building, at 869 E. Fifth St., has been owned by Catholic Charities since 2003 and has been vacant for years. Lang hopes to house up to 24 residents, including four on-site paid staff.

Lang said he's given a letter of intent to purchase the building to Catholic Charities, which he said agreed to the purchase contingent upon community support.

Catholic Charities officials confirmed that the property was for sale and that they had received the letter but declined to comment further "because there is ongoing dialogue on this real estate transaction."

Freedom Works, started by volunteers from Wayzata Evangelical Free Church in Plymouth, renovated the North Minneapolis property in 2003.

The nonprofit receives 50 percent of its funding from individual donors, 25 percent from church and family foundations, and another quarter from residents' rent (it charges its clients anywhere from \$275 to \$400 a month).

Executive director Lang, who grew up on St. Paul's West Side, has been through the program himself: He served a total of 7 1/2 years during three stints in prison for offenses such as possessing cocaine and a stolen handgun. He was last released in 2006.

"I needed a geographical change, but I had no support. I was busted on every level. I would've hung around the same people and got the same result," Lang said.

The faith-based ministry searches for men in prison -- those already engaged in Bible study or other religious programs -- who organizers believe display signs of true conversion and have demonstrated the Bible's teachings on the inside.

"We could fill beds all day," Lang said. "We're not looking to fill beds. We'll hold them for good candidates." Right now, there are 50 on its application list, and roughly a dozen men waiting for spots, he said.

Men usually stay in the program for nine months to a year -- working on building trust with other residents, starting a career, and giving back to the community around them.

"If you're not about serving others, and just about serving yourself, that's what got you into prison to begin with," Lang said. "Our guys need avenues to extend their faith."

While started by Evangelicals, the program serves all manner of denominations within the Christian faith, Lang said.

GOOD IMPRESSIONS

Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom, who lives in the nearby Swede Hollow neighborhood, said he's been impressed with the program's efforts after some limited exposure.

"This one's at least worth hearing out -- that's the way I see it," Bostrom said. "If this isn't the pathway (to recidivism), then which model is it?"

"They have a structure that seems to be working 90 percent of the time. That's hard for me to deny, that that program doesn't have some effect," Bostrom added.

Bostrom says he's a man of strong faith himself but denies that has anything to do with his urging people to

hear the program out.

"There's a lot of faith-based groups out there. ... In my role as sheriff, that's not what people elected me to do. They elected me to be honest. If I've got a program that's demonstrating results, that's what I pay attention to."

Lang said the recidivism rate among people in his program is about 4 percent.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections, using data compiled for a 2014 study, calculated that on average, 25 percent of adults released from its prisons returned within three years, and 34 percent of adults are convicted of a new felony offense within three years.

The Twin Cities Academy is considering moving to a larger location several miles away once its lease is up in June 2016, contingent upon the Minnesota Department of Education's approval.

Officials with the Sacred Heart Church, which owns the Academy property, have said they worry about leasing the building if Freedom Works goes in next door.

Another community meeting on the Freedom Works proposal will take place at the Dayton's Bluff Community Council headquarters, 804 Margaret St., at 7 p.m. Monday.

Tad Vezner can be reached at 651-228-5461.

I tried getting petitions signed because the position of the Dayton Bluff community Council. Members of community are not neutral and many have valid concerns about the general health and welfare of the community if the use is allowed. Just door knocking for 2 hours on Wednesday night 4/29/2015,¹ every house I went to was very confused on what was going on and if they could voice concerns. Wondering where in the process this was. I handed out copies of the pioneer press article. 11² people signed the petition in opposition 4 requested more time. One person was concerned of ramification of city and community if opposed. I would request the petition information not be public, but evidence to both Dayton Bluff Community Council and zoning commission that neighborhood is not neutral on this issue.

Speaking with Sage the head of land use community for Dayton Bluff City Council she was only informed about the request for a conditional use by the newspaper article. Other members were uninformed. Something this important should not be streamlined in.

Deanna made a statement to zoning commission, but the Dayton bluff Council board never voted on their position or the statement to be given.

¹ Some residents put 4/28/2015 because they put wrong date other copied that date. All signatures were from 4/29/2015.

² 3 were handed the wrong petition and signed request for more time instead of being opposed petition. They are noted on the petition. If time allows I may try to correct this.

PROTEST PETITION SECTION I. I/we, the undersigned property owners or resident, Request more time to get more information on the proposed zoning conditional use transitional housing for property described as 869 E. fifth St. St. Paul MN 55106 Case No. 15-021-950, Conditional Use Permission.

SECTION II. Protestor(s).

Signature: *David Alliso*
Typed name: _____
Address: 600 E Mendota St Paul Mn
Dated: 4-28-15

Signature: *Justine King*
Typed name: _____
Address: 411 E. Ananias
Dated: 4/28/15

Signature: *Sarah Reeves*
Typed name: Sarah Reeves
Address: 889 East 6th St. St Paul mn 55106
Dated: 4/28/15

Signature: *Debra Huerta*
Typed name: Debra Huerta, Jeffrey Huerta (spouse)
Address: 895 E 6th St St Paul
Dated: 4-29-15

Want to sign both
PREP

Signature: *Carmen Rubio*
Typed name: Rebeca Castilla
Address: 911 E. 6th St.
Dated: 4/29/15

Signed using petition

PROTEST PETITION SECTION I. I/we, the undersigned property owners or resident, protest the proposed zoning conditional use transitional housing for property described as 869 E. fifth St. St. Paul MN 55106 Case No. 15—021-950 , Conditional Use Permission.

SECTION II. Protestor(s).

Signature: Heidi M. Burkhalter
Typed name: Heidi M. Burkhalter
Address: 734 4th Street St. Paul, MN 55106
Dated: 4/28/15

Signature: OTIS BAILEY
Typed name: OTIS BAILEY
Address: 619 MCNULTY ST # 1 ST. PAUL MN, 55106
Dated: 4/28/15

Signature: Lafess Fobbs
Typed name: Lafess Fobbs
Address: 274 5th St. East
Dated: 4/29/2015

Signature: Dan Vu
Typed name: Dan Vu
Address: 922 6th St
Dated: 4/29/15

Signature: Sara J Boate
Typed name: Sara J Boate
Address: 918 6th St E
Dated: 4/29/15

PROTEST PETITION SECTION I. I/we, the undersigned property owners or resident, protest the proposed zoning conditional use transitional housing for property described as 869 E. fifth St. St. Paul MN 55106 Case No. 15—021-950 , Conditional Use Permission.

SECTION II. Protestor(s).

Signature : *Opal Haskins*
Typed name: *Opal Haskins*
Address: *737 E 3rd St*
Dated: *4/29/15*

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

PROTEST PETITION SECTION I. I/we, the undersigned property owners or resident, protest the proposed zoning conditional use transitional housing for property described as 869 E. fifth St. St. Paul MN 55106 Case No. 15—021-950 , Conditional Use Permission.

SECTION II. Protestor(s).

Signature : John Jordan
Typed name: John Jordan
Address 731 E. 3rd St.
Dated: 04/29/2015

Signature : [Signature]
Typed name: Sally Jordan
Address 731 3rd St. E
Dated: 04-29-2015

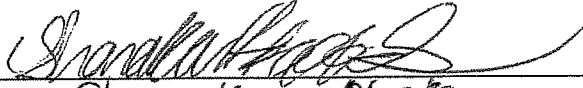
Signature : Dana Burstone
Typed name: Daniel Burstone
Address 731 4th St E St Paul MN 55106
Dated: 4/29/2015

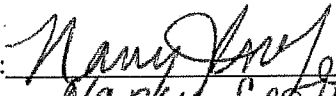
Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

PROTEST PETITION SECTION I. I/we, the undersigned property owners or resident, Request more time to get more information on the proposed zoning conditional use transitional housing for property described as 869 E. fifth St. St. Paul MN 55106 Case No. 15—021-950, Conditional Use Permission.

SECTION II. Protestor(s).

Signature : 
Typed name: Shanaka Bicks
Address 904 E 55th
Dated: 4/29/15

Signature : 
Typed name: Nancy Costage
Address 735 E. 4th St.
Dated: 4/29/15

g. ven
w/ans
pet. if
→

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

Signature : _____
Typed name: _____
Address _____
Dated: _____

