

February 2, 2015

Dear City Council Members,

As a longtime business and property owner, I feel that the widening of the Snelling Avenue sidewalk to accommodate decorative lights is not needed for the safety of pedestrians, will create **safety** issues for those who park on Snelling Avenue, will be a **financial burden** on business owners most of whom do not want it and will be a waste of taxpayers' money. I have talked to many business owners in a two block area where parking is now available and none of them want or have asked for the decorative lighting and they do not want to see the width of the parking area decreased in order to provide expensive unneeded decorative lighting.

I was told recently at the open house to explain what is going to be done on Snelling Avenue that all of the businesses had an opportunity to participate. After reviewing a copy of the Hwy 51 Multi Modal Study dated January 24, 2013, I found it interesting that in appendix A there was a list of participants but there were **no** names of local business owners included in the study and discussion that I could see. There was a single representative who was not from any of the businesses but an employee from the Midway Civic and Commerce Association but not one single local owner. Why is this? The reason being is that none of us were notified of the meetings nor we invited to participate. Thus, many of us feel that we never had the opportunity to participate in the planning and discussion of the proposed changes which is frustrating since the changes will impact the businesses on Snelling Avenue more than residents living off of Snelling Ave.

The additional 2 feet of boulevard needed for the decorative lighting does nothing to enhance the safety of the pedestrians and it will significantly decrease the safety of those individuals who park their cars on Snelling Avenue, the vehicles and bicycles traveling on Snelling Ave. Our 6' wide sidewalks already comply with ADA width requirements without counting the 2 feet boulevards. In essence you will be widening the sidewalk area from 8' to 10' and decrease the parking from 10 & 11 feet respectfully to 8 or 9 feet which is less than the walking area. Daily I see maybe 30 people on a given day walk by my office but there are significantly more that 50 cars in a day that park on my block on Snelling Avenue each day where a driver gets out of the car and goes in to visit one of the businesses or shops. The safety of these individuals exiting their cars is important.

On a normal city street the narrowing of the parking area would not be a concern but you are talking about Snelling Avenue which is the **busiest street in the city and is a major truck route**. In addition to wide trucks (many are 8 feet wide or more) you have very wide buses and wide emergency vehicles traveling on this street. I have been told there are **37,000** vehicles that go by my office (Snelling & Blair) each day. In essence you will be putting parked vehicles out closer to the moving traffic and creating a dangerous condition for the persons exiting the parked cars and the other vehicles and bikes traveling on Snelling Avenue.

In Minnesota we have snow half of the year and when the street is plowed there is generally snow left in the parking areas 2 feet or more from the curb. This ends up pushing the cars parking on Snelling Avenue during the winter further out into the street which is dangerous for the drivers of vehicles traveling on Snelling Avenue and also for those exiting the parked vehicles. I have attached a picture I took last Monday on the way home from the open house of the east side of Snelling Avenue looking north of Minnehaha Ave. I wish I had known what was coming down the pike and I would have a picture after a major snow fall. The ice you can see on the street is only a small portion of the

residue remaining after a snow fall and this is what is left over after we have had many days of warm weather that melted the bulk of the snow and ice. You can imagine where the snow had been and more than likely it was further out since this is the remaining ice. After most storms, the snow plow crews leave snow even further out from the curb than what is shown in this picture. If you widen our sidewalk/boulevard area you essentially will eliminate parking on Snelling Avenue for half of the year. Where will our clients and customers park? Safe functional parking is more critical to my business and that of our neighbors than decorative lighting. Most businesses are closed after 5:00 or 6:00 pm.

Please drive down Snelling Avenue and park by my law office during a work day when the traffic is fairly heavy. To get the real feel of what it would be like if the planned improvements were in place, please park your vehicle 4 feet from the curb where it would end parking if you widened the sidewalk and had two feet of snow sitting next to the curb. Sit there for a few minutes and watch the cars breeze past 1 to 2 feet from the side of your vehicle. When a truck goes by you will feel the car rock. Then try and get out of your vehicle during daytime traffic. You will very quickly realize how close the cars will be coming to your car and how dangerous it will be to exit. With the current parking width a person can get out of his car and if the traffic is coming you normally have room to stand and walk next to the car to move out of the approaching traffic. You will also see that many cars are traveling far in excess of the 30 mph speed limit. Sometimes I see cars speeding up to 50 mph rushing down Snelling Avenue. Then think about those persons who are older and not as agile and mobile as you and I are and you will see that the width of the parking area is needed. Many of my clients are older persons. About 10 years ago I observed a car traveling south on Snelling Avenue take the driver's side door off a parked car as the driver tried to open the driver's side car door to exit the car. If this happened with 10 & 11' wide parking area what will happen when you narrow it and push cars closer to the traffic lane?

I have been told that the current lighting on Snelling Avenue will remain. The current lighting is more than adequate to light up the sidewalk. The decorative lighting that you are planning will add nothing to the safety of the street or esthetic value but it will increase the cost for businesses and landowners. It is not only the initial assessment which is out of sight but it also the ongoing maintenance cost the owners will be assessed for each year to maintain and provide electricity for the lights. The rental market in this area is already depressed and it will make it more difficult to rent property when you increase the costs of owning and operating a building on Snelling Avenue. In my opinion it will add nothing to the value of our property and the reduction of safe parking will in fact decrease the value of our property. In my opinion and that of others, it will be a financial burden on us and it will put even more pressure on those businesses that are already struggling financially. The assessment will **not** increase the value of our property and in fact decreasing the parking area will negatively impact the property value.

Some of us business owners have already provided decorative lighting on our buildings to accent our buildings. You would enhance business more by offering incentives to the individual property owners to plan and upgrade the exteriors and the lighting of the exterior of their buildings on Snelling Avenue than to install the decorative lighting in the boulevard.

Please do **not** back or support this resolution to install decorative lighting and to reduce the width of our parking areas on Snelling Ave and to increase the costs of doing business in the City of St. Paul. If this assessment is passed we will appeal said assessment. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Stephen L. Nelson
665 No. Snelling Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Kathryn M. Nelson

