

bethlehem lutheran in the midway

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Rooted by Christ for our ever-changing community.

September 17, 2025

This letter is in support of the City of St. Paul's proposal to require the abandoned and fenced in property formally known as CVS at the corner of Snelling Ave and University Ave. to be abated or possibly demolished.

Since CVS vacated the property in 2022, we have seen an increase in loitering, drug use, and graffiti on and around our property. The perception of the neighborhood being unsafe has led to a decreased attendance at both worship and other events held here. Drug use and loitering, which have increased since the fence was installed around the CVS property, continue to pressure our congregation to commit more resources, both financial and emotional, to combat this problem.

As followers of Jesus, we are committed to loving our neighbors. Our love of neighbor calls us to voice our concern about the negative impacts to our neighborhood—residents, business owners, non-profits, and faith communities. We, along with so many of our neighbors, are exhausted.

Our small congregation has spent significant financial resources to provide a safe building space, both for worship and for the many community events that are held here, or have the potential to be held here. Our long standing place in the Midway gives us the institutional memory to remember a safe, vibrant, walkable neighborhood. The vacant CVS building is not only an eye-sore, but creates a sense that the neighborhood is not safe, not vibrant, and, to use a word we often hear, "dying."

Hope is incredibly powerful...and hopelessness is, too. While financial losses for us are significant, more important are the losses of perceived safety, neighborhood pride, and, most profoundly, hope. These losses will continue to grow, both for our congregation and for our neighbors, until negative impacts of the area, including CVS, can be addressed.

Additionally, CVS and property ownership (which is out of state) is not at all motivated and has been unresponsive to three years of ongoing requests to maintain and secure the property. Instead, the property is abandoned, vandalized, and deteriorating more with each passing week.

We support the City of St. Paul's efforts to swiftly require the property owner to abate the property or face demolition.

Best,
Rev. Kirsten Fryer
On behalf of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the Midway