

From: Gabriel Harren [<mailto:gjharren@gmail.com>]
Sent: Sunday, December 3, 2017 3:16 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1-7 <Ward1-7@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: The Listening House on North Street

Dear Council Members,

We are writing you to give you a brief plea to enforce the relocation of The Listening House.

The relocation of The Listening House is not a matter of anyone disagreeing with their necessary mission. It is a rational conclusion when learning how The Listening House's clientele have fundamentally changed our neighborhood, making it an unsafe place to live.

Given all the camaraderie over the years with our neighbors, we think that it is clear that the members of our neighborhood are the type of people who care about those in need of help within our community. We have worked with People Inc. and are proud to have a productive sober house in our community. The same goes true for the Greenhouse Recovery Center, another sober organization in our community. Yet, The Listening House brings something fundamentally different to our residential neighborhood. We have children, single women, seniors and a many public visitors to the 30 acre nature park just down the bluff who are put at risk with the clientele of The Listening House.

I am the owner of the house directly across the street from the church in which The Listening House is currently located. I lived there for years, until my husband and I needed more space to start our family. We are still very invested in the community and make it a mission to provide safe and quiet homes for our tenants who live in our quad plex.

When this house was purchased in 2008, we invested tens of thousands of dollars into the house: cleaning up the yard, giving the house a facelift and bringing it back to a more historical image, and lovingly renovating every apartment, so it would appeal to responsible individuals and families looking for a quiet and peaceful place to live. Since The Listening House has moved in:

- We have received requests from our tenants to add additional locks to the front door and a security system.
- We have gotten reports of The Listening House clients sitting on our porch (private property) when our tenant and her child came home for the day
- There has been excessive garbage on our lawn
- The Listening House clients have come to the door begging / asking for money.
- We have been told that people no longer feel safe walking in Swede Hollow due to the dramatic increase of homeless squatting in the park, a park we have treasured and have enjoyed going for evening strolls in over the years.

We are concerned for our tenants, our neighbors, and their families. We also fear for our ability to get the same quality of people to want to live in a neighborhood where it is becoming harder and harder to have a sense of safety.

Please, relocate the The Listening House. Do not make this decision about supporting The Listening House mission, this is about a residential neighborhood and a misplaced service provider. This neighborhood has worked so hard individually and together to make it a more appealing place for people to live, bringing down crime and working together as a strong and involved community.

It is your responsibility to enforce zoning using rational decisions based on empirical evidence. This is not the right location for The Listening House services.

Thank you for your support.

Katie Kalkman & Gabriel Harren
619 North st.
St. Paul, MN 55106

Sent: Monday, December 04, 2017 11:05 AM

Subject: Listening House Appeal

Dear Ward 1-7 Member,

I am writing you in support of moving Listening House to a nonresidential neighborhood. My name is Kristen Johnson; I have lived in Dayton's Bluff for 27 years. I bought my house before I was married; it was a rehabbed house by the city of St. Paul as part of neighborhood revitalization. I am from a small town in North Dakota and everyone thought I was crazy, but I knew it was the place for me. I kept telling everyone, it's 'a diamond in the rough,' and I was right. More and more families moved in and more homes were renovated and neighbors held landlords accountable for their properties. Everyone worked together and it was transformed into a family friendly place. The retired people in the neighborhood kept telling us, how great it was to see kids back in the neighborhood. I cannot tell you how many butter-braids for hockey and pizzas for Lacrosse and Christmas wreaths for Cub Scouts my neighbors have bought. I feel we have the best neighbors ever.

This transformation did have one big hiccup that threatened families with the opening of a Wet Dry House by People Inc. Luckily this program cooperated and was moved to a more compatible area. However, again this summer, there was a threat to the safety of Dayton's Bluff families with the opening of Listening House. I feel that all our hard work has been reversed and the neighborhood has been taken back 27 years by the addition of Listening House and their guests.

I do not know zoning laws, but I do know that the Listening House operating out of First Lutheran Church is not compatible with family residents. Supporters of Listening House claim that we have always had these problems in Dayton's Bluff, but I disagree. Even 27 years ago when it was pretty rough, you would only see a random homeless person sleeping in the Hollow and you would call the police and they would move them and get them social services. This summer was a different story in Swede Hollow, with large camps of homeless set up and people following you yelling obscenities, I have never witnessed anything like this before. Not to mention the increase in theft. I work from home and see it all. One day I noticed a bicycler with a Burley being used to haul 4 bikes. Instantly you think, that is not right. Then I notice a neighbor following him in her van, the bicycler then unhooked the Burley and fled. She then tells me this person was in her garage when she got home, with her tent already taken out of her garage. He claimed he only wanted water but she knew differently and followed him while calling the police. She was really brave; you never know what will set off a person on drugs. I do think I could have confronted him like that. Long story short he was caught by the police and charged with third degree burglary. After the large group left from in front of my house and only two police officers were present to record serial numbers, I went out and asked if this person was associated with the Listening House, they said 'Yes, two officers just left to go talk with the Listening House staff right now.' I had to ask them, 'What are we going to do about this?' Their response was, to just keep complaining, but our complaints are falling on deaf ears.

I know there are plenty of supporters of Listening House, but they must not live close to the foot traffic of Listening House. It is true that the amount of homeless is increasing and Listening House is a needed service. They probably does have success stories, but after working all day, your home is your resting place and it is not fair to expect us to take care of the un-rehabbed on the streets after closing time for Listening House.

It is unfortunate that you are being told, in these letters by my neighbors, of only the failures of Listening House, but these are the incidents that threaten our family's safety. Being a Mom, that is my main job period, to keep my kids safe. Listening House serves the unscreened, the worst of the worst according to their newspaper articles. To me, it just seems absurd to ask families to expose their children to this behavior. Children are needed in a neighborhood and give vitality to a neighborhood. Please help to make our neighborhood safe and family friendly. Please relocate the Listening House.

Thank you, Kristen Johnson 752 Margaret Street St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

Relocation of these services to a more appropriate commercial corridor are requested.

Name

Ivan-Lorraine Wilson

Address

720 E 7 St.
St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

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Name

Oddie Krieg

Address

720 7th St. E
St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

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Name

Milan Mochurak

Address

Cambria Sr. Apt.
720 7th St. E. - St. Paul 55106

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Name

Glenn Robertson

Address

720 7th St. East
St. Paul

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11/2017

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Name T. Strong

Address 720 7th Street E. #328
St. Paul, MN. 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

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Name Joanne E. Dupin

Address Cambridge Apts #422
55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

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Name Pamela Keegan

Address 720 East 7th St. #337
St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

Relocation of these services to a more appropriate commercial corridor are requested.

Name Aracelis C. Mantua

Address 920 E 7th St. #441
St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

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Name Cynthia Morrow

Address 720 E 7th Street
St Paul Mn 55106

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11/2017

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Name Kathleen Bliven

Address Cambrie Apts.
55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

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Relocation of these services to a more appropriate commercial corridor are requested.

Name

Yish Patel

Address

700 E. 7th St. #112

St. Paul, MN 55106

Dear Members of the City Council,

11/2017

As a resident of the Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood I urge you to hear my concerns about the incompatibility of Listening House, a low barrier drop in day shelter, in our residential neighborhood. The detrimental impact is not sustainable to the livability or the quiet enjoyment of my home and family. Please adhere to the Zoning Committee's determination and up hold the appeal. Listening House can not continue to operate without regards to the safety and security of the residents in our neighborhood.

Relocation of these services to a more appropriate commercial corridor are requested.

Name

Yaya Mohamed

Address

720 E 7th St.

St Paul MN 55106

Our letter follows:

To be concise, having Listening House move to First Lutheran Church and expansion of the homeless program with the Listening House is one where the church has not been a "good neighbor". People who live in the vicinity of the church report that there have been multiple issues that already existed and that many issues have not been addressed (urination, defecation, trash, panhandling, harrassment, etc) with the program that was there servicing the homeless on a

much smaller scale - and now they want to expand the program and keep it here for a long period of time?

These are more than just nuisance issues, they affect the livability of the area. Turning a blind eye to this situation will be the beginning of a downhill trend - and quite frankly - too many good people/neighbors have battled many issues pertaining to making the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood a community that is safe. To be frank, residents in Dayton's Bluff are not asking for the impossible. We merely ask that we be respected and have what others want for their own neighborhood. We choose to live here but leadership members need to be mindful of what truly makes a neighborhood livable - and we all need to be really honest - people getting high, profanity, littering, urination and defecation - having this be your reality 24/7 - this speaks volumes as to why this is not something neighbors should be subjected to at all. It is not any wonder that the church did not want to communicate their plans with the community. Even more telling, this is why homeless shelters are typically not put in residential neighborhoods. We are not heartless, but we are reasonable!

Also, why the secretive manner in which this plan was hatched? Neighbors were NOT told, and if other agencies were informed, it seems that rather than being upfront with nearby community members of the plan, it was handled in a way that leads to mistrust and no transparency. We depend on those in leadership positions (church, city, council) to do the right thing and take steps to do the best for the community at large. Look at the Union Gospel Mission - for example. Its location is very different than that of 1st Lutheran! The homeless do need to have services provided, but in a residential area is not a reasonable choice. Nearby are several businesses and a state university.

Safety is issue number one - for residents and the homeless - and it appears that the lack of planning and lack of engaging the community is setting this up for a total failure! Good intentions need to be more than a desire to be a helping hand. To do it properly, there needs to be multitude of well-trained staff on hand 24/7 - from drug counselors, security staff, social workers, security cameras, collaborative programs with the already too busy local police, rules that are strictly adhered to and followed, monthly neighborhood outreach sessions - just to name a few. It appears that is has not even been given a thought or will be provided with the program expansion at 1st Lutheran. The nearby residents are not heartless, and they do deserve to feel like they live in a "home environment". To expect neighbors to be silent and label them as unsympathetic is disrespectful to say the least.

As a neighbor having lived in Dayton's Bluff for more than 26 years, it gets terribly frustrating to keep "fighting battles" to make our community safe and

livable. We have been on community councils and gone to many a meeting to help make our neighborhood one to be proud of for us all. We have seen changes for the positive and changes that have come due to neighborhood input. But we have also known many good neighbors who got tired of the constant issues and have had "ENOUGH" and moved out of our community. What a shame! There has been too much "Urban Flight" and Dayton's Bluff has gotten more than its share over the years. We need a variety of people who feel like this a place to put down roots and make it home. All we ask of those in leadership is to give neighbors a helping hand - and to respect those who sincerely ask for "lifesavers" but instead are given "sets of anchors"!

Really take in to account what is happening with this situation. It is not as simple as "us" vs. "them". We, who have chosen Dayton's Bluff as our home, are proud that our neighborhood is about as diverse a neighborhood that you will find in our city. But from the beginning, neighbors had no role in the process of First Lutheran acquiring the Listening House program. That was the wrong thing to do. Is there a need for this program in the city? Absolutely! There is a reason that programs that cater to the needs of the homeless are not plopped down in the middle of residential neighborhoods. According to realtor.com, shelter type of programs are often limited to less than prime areas in a city where home values are about 13.7% less than the average. It will cost you as a homeowner about 12.7% "drag" on your home value. Residents in this area have invested more than money into homes, but city officials have to keep in mind that if they want Dayton's Bluff to continue to grow and prosper, a move like this does not accommodate such a plan for growth. First Lutheran and Listening House have a responsibility to be a part a team who will be helping the residents and city to prosper and grow. So far, its beginnings have been built on a very shaky foundation, no transparency, and little support for not only the clientele that they serve, but for the community at large.

Finally, you will probably only hear from neighbors who know who to contact in these types of situations and how this process of voicing an opinion works. There are many others in our neighborhood who are "voiceless" as in they do not speak English as their native language, or have the means or knowledge of speaking up with their concerns. This becomes an equity issue and to have these same individuals just have problems "dumped" on their doorstep- well, it will be an injustice to those community members as well. Remember, NO ONE was told of this plan! The church did not even try to do an "outreach" to any of us in the neighborhood. We ask that you take this all into account.

Mr & Mrs John Smith on Sixth Street