

Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul)

From: Kate Mudge <kate@hamlinemidway.org>
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2020 10:16 AM
To: Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul); *CI-StPaul_LegislativeHearings
Subject: Hamline Midway Coalition letter- 678 N Snelling
Attachments: 678 Snelling 06-22-20.docx.pdf

Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.

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Please include the letter below to be shared at the Legislative Hearing tomorrow in regards to 678 Snelling Ave. North.

Hamline Midway Coalition
1558 Minnehaha Ave W
St. Paul, MN 55104

June 22, 2020

Re: [RLH RR20-22](#) Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 678 SNELLING AVENUE NORTH within fifteen (15) days after the May 27, 2020 City Council public hearing. (To be referred back to Legislative Hearing on June 23)

To the City of St. Paul:

We would like to provide a neighborhood perspective and input on the future of the GreatFans building at 678 Snelling Ave N., St. Paul, MN 55104.

Until about four years ago, GreatFans (formerly Dan's Fan City) at 678 Snelling Ave. N. was a well-known independent retail store in the North Snelling business district of Hamline-Midway. While we understand that the building has been vacant and is suffering from disrepair, it is our stand that demolition is not a desirable outcome and would be detrimental to the neighborhood.

For much of the twentieth century, nearby University Avenue was known for its many large car dealerships. But in the early decades of the automotive era, this district was wider-spread, reaching north and south along Snelling Avenue. Built in 1926 as Long Brothers Motors, 678 Snelling has housed many businesses over the years, but in the 1920's and 30's it was home of dealerships that sold and serviced Dodge and Plymouth vehicles.

While not as large as the big-name dealerships on University, the Long Brothers building is in no way lacking in character, retaining the detailed brickwork of 1920's commercial architecture and the large windows that once displayed vehicles for sale. These very characteristics are what make the building desirable today for commercial reuse and worthy of preservation.

Our neighborhood has recently suffered significant loss. Just one block away, independent drugstore Lloyd's Pharmacy burned to the ground after serving the neighborhood for over one hundred years. Many other businesses in the Midway have been displaced due to fire and looting. As businesses look to relocate and recover, it is a step in the wrong

direction to destroy another standing building (albeit one in need of rehabilitation) and leave in its place what may be a vacant lot for years to come.

During this recovery and rebuilding effort, our first focus should be on preserving our existing resources. A study by the National Trust for Historic Preservation has found that it can take from 10 to 80 years for a newly-constructed, energy-efficient building to offset the effects on our climate from its construction. It is also apparent that a building with the character and detail of 678 Snelling could not be replicated in a cost-effective manner using today's building materials and techniques.

Finally, 678 Snelling has been discussed as having a potential role in the Hamline Midway Coalition's efforts to support the growth of small businesses through the development of a small business incubator. While the final form of this effort is to be determined, an existing 8,000+ square foot building in the heart of our business district that embodies so much neighborhood history could serve a key role in the development of the Hamline Midway businesses of tomorrow.

Respectfully,

HMC Development Committee Members

[Hamline Midway Coalition](#)

Kate Mudge

Executive Director

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