To: David Hoban, Deputy Director, Department of Safety and Inspections

Council President Noecker, Council President Councilmember Bowie, Ward 1

Councilmember Molly Coleman, Ward 4

St. Paul City Council members

From: Spruce Tree Centre LLP / 1600 Spruce Tree

1600 University Avenue West. St. Paul, MN

Re: Graffiti on the side of 1605 University Avenue W and on billboards on top of 1605 University Avenue West, St. Paul.

1600 Spruce Tree, the iconic green building on the corner of Snelling and University Avenue has endured graffiti on the side of 1605 University and graffiti covered signs on BOTH sides of the TWO billboards on tope of 1605 University for the past four years.

Over the past four years we have called and complained about this graffiti on numerous occasions. Since our complaints were not acted ignored, we assigned a staff member the task of documenting our complaints to DSI starting in December 2024. Our colleague Melissa Alexander filed complaints via e-mail and talked to DSI on week after week. We would be happy to provide a chronology of her e-mails to DSI as well as her phone contacts with DSI staff.

This ongoing graffiti blight has contributed to a severe and measurable decline in our ability to attract and retain tenants. Our current occupancy rate remains below 55%, a historically low figure that we directly attribute in part to the continued presence of the graffiti and the neglected condition of the adjacent structures. Prospective tenants have explicitly cited the surrounding visual environment as a deterrent to leasing space in our building, citing safety concerns, perceived neglect, and an overall diminished sense of professionalism in the area.

The graffiti can be seen in Google Maps' photos (see Appendix #1) and is visible to potential visitors to our building. According to Chapter 64 of the zoning code, "Unsightly signs must be repaired or removed within fifteen (15) days of notification.". It is now August 2025. The graffiti covered billboards have not been leased for the past four years and should be removed due to non-use.

Recently we were frustrated to see that during the first week in August, the graffiti on the advertising panels was partially covered by black paint (see Appendix #3). The unprofessional, half completed, black paint job has exacerbated the situation. There is now a large portion of the billboard sign on the west side of the 'double billboard sign" that has become disconnected and is flapping in the wind.

1600 Spruce Tree and its neighbors, Pivot Apartments and The Pitch Apartments continue to be adversely impacted by this graffiti. For example, recently Spruce Tree's first floor tenant Minnesota Council on Disability had an event to open their new conference room. Several dignitaries attended including Minnesota Senator John Marty, Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, Erica Rivers and Gaelyn Lea. When these folks arrived, they were greeted with the boarded up CVS Store and two very large billboards covered in graffiti.

The billboard, which remains unmaintained and has not displayed any advertising for years, now serves only as a canvas for repeated vandalism, drawing further negative attention to the area and lowering the property values of surrounding commercial investments.

We strongly urge the appropriate authorities to take swift and decisive action. Continued inaction will only deepen the economic impact on our property and the surrounding business district. We also request that the billboard be removed entirely or repurposed in a way that contributes positively to the neighborhood rather than attracting criminal mischief.

This matter is urgent, and the ongoing delay has resulted in tangible financial harm and reputational damage to our property and ownership. We respectfully request consideration of these long-standing concerns as the building owner appeals the decision regarding the billboard.

The 1605 building owner has had four years to address this issue. During that time, owner of the building billboard has done NOTHING to address this graffiti. The owner of the 1605 building / billboard on top of the building needs to be held accountable for his failure to remove the graffiti.

The City of St. Paul aggressively enforces its requirements for our building; ie. elevator inspections, snow removal, fire marshal / certificate of occupancy inspections, building permit inspections. We request equally aggressive enforcement of the City of St. Paul's signage ordinances for the 1605 University Ave. Building.

Sincerely,

Spruce Tree Centre LLP

Ownership and Management.