Mai Vang

From: Reynolds, Mike <mreynolds@hamline.edu>
Sent: Sunday, September 28, 2025 8:54 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_LegislativeHearings
Subject: Hearing - CVS building on University and Snelling --499 Snelling Ave

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Good morning-
I write to submit a statement of concern and impact regarding the long-vacant CVS building at the corner of University and Snelling Avenues. I understand there will be a public hearing on 9/30, and a City Council hearing on 11/5, and my statement is intended as support for demolition of the property at both. The closure, long-term neglect of the property, and long-term and seemingly permanent failure to make timely moves toward reinvestment in the space create a multitude of harms to the community.

Since the closure of the pharmacy, the site has been marked by a profound and unacceptable neglect from the owners. The building is boarded up, and often marked by graffiti; it was initially a magnet for all kinds of garbage, and after months of complaints the owners simply put a large fence around the empty parking lot. The vacant space also lacks reliable administrative attention, and the empty property has become a site for behaviors and gatherings that compound citywide challenges about the trafficking of drugs and the lack of shelter and resources for many. It is quite fair to say: the crises impacting the Green Line station at University and moving North up Snelling have been made worse by the continued neglect of the buildiing.

The site's lack of reasonable development/investment is a different harm in that it reduces possible, necessary resources to the community. Whatever could be in that building would serve neighbors, and the failure to find an active business for the space produces not just an absence but active harm and loss of resources needed to serve the community. The long vacancy of the building signals a complete disregard for the responsibilities of municipal property ownership. The owners have failed to engage in any meaningful attempts to appropriately invest in and develop the property since the closure of the pharmacy. The lack of development also directly undercuts the collection of appropriate tax revenues to support necessary services and investment from the City to improve the surrounding businesses and neighborhoods.

Finally, that material harm (no investment, and insufficient, inappropriate tax revenues for a property at a central site) is compounded by a symbolic harm, which feeds back into and worsens the material harm. The ongoing departure of businesses within a half-mile of the vacant CVS building are not the fault of these particular owners. But that high-profile building, in a high-profile location, signals (falsely, but harmfully) about the state of this neighborhood and intersection, compounding and worsening public perception. That perception harms existing local businesses and organizations, and the vacancy and neglect of the CVS site continues to negatively impact nearby owners and undercut commerce. That perception also worsens the reluctance of new property development nearby, and amplifies the crisis of disinvestment facing the University/Snelling corridors and surrounding communities.

I respectfully ask the City and the Council to act quickly on the failure to abate the nuisance and help redress the harms that these owners, through their long-time neglect, have created to the Midway and surrounding neighborhoods.

Mike Reynolds