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>> To the City Council,

>> What do we think will happen to folks [Council@ci.stwith](mailto:Council@ci.stwith) little or no access to Listening House? Where will our guests go, and who will support them?

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>> Government wants churches to take care of the poor and those in need, and they are doing all they can. Now, however, others want to restrict this church - allow a few in and bar the others.

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>> They/we need Listening House to give the unconditional love and support that our guests need to give them hope.

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>> This past spring as I was working in the kitchen, a woman came in who was weeping, angry, pacing. She was clearly beside herself. Staff sat down and listened as she poured out her story. She had been betrayed, mocked and abused. She eventually calmed down and could lift her head up because someone who knew her by name was compassionate and engaged. What if no one was there? Would her anger cause her to lash out? Would her anger escalate or cause some self destruction or cause depression?

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>> My father was the first generation from Austria born in America. When he was about 17, it was the Depression. He had no job. There were seven other brothers and sisters and a father who was a railroad amputee. My father joined CCC's. There were long lines of people looking for any kind of work. There were soup kitchens and the like. Do we not want people like this to be cared for? We need to help them and not just wish they would disappear. My mother was from a poor family too. The support they received along the way kept them from being overwhelmed so they could find a way out of poverty.

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>> Our guests are offered a cup of coffee, maybe a donut, a safe place to sit and maybe nap, a token earned for helping us clean up at Listening House. If they need a birth certificate, help is available. Maybe they need a counselor, some first aid, a hug, a snack, some clean socks, a bathroom, hygiene items. I love to hear them play the guitar or the piano. I love seeing folks talk, smile and laugh as they have their morning coffee together. So many little needs we take for granted. I worked in a hospital, and the ones that did best were the ones not going home alone but who had some caring support. It didn't matter if it was a medical condition, chemical dependency, or a mental health need. We all need someone who cares.

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>> Please allow both Listening House and The First Lutheran Church to fulfill their missions. They care; they are there for the duration. I think the community will be better off having them stay and function as they see fit. They are well qualified to handle this mission.

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>> Thank you,

>> Pam Troje (a volunteer for 12 years at Listening House)

Dear Members of the St. Paul City Council,

I ask your careful consideration in limiting the number of persons that Listening House, at First Lutheran Church on the East side, can serve in their ministry to the homeless persons. With the coming of the winter months, it is critically important that people who need the serves and are willing to come forward because they need, be served. All of the ministries and agencies are attempting to do the very best they can. People need help. Please do not exercise our power by limiting the services.

If possible; please help Listening House, and other agencies, continue to find ways to easily serve, including creating more affordable housing.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Sr. Sharon M. Howell, CSJ**

525 S. Fairview Ave. Apt.

St. Paul, MN 55116

**From:** N BADER [<mailto:NABADER1@msn.com>]

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 29, 2017 4:44 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward3

**Subject:** Concerned about Listening House

Councilmember Tolbert,

As a member of Ward 3 in St. Paul I hope you'll listen to concerns I have about Listening House, a social service agency in St. Paul, and will support their mission and work when they appear before the City Council on December 6, 2017.

Listening House will appear before the City Council to ask for the restrictions that have been placed on them to be removed. I'd like to share the following facts:

If Listening House is capped at serving 20 people daily, it is forced to deny many people assistance, leaving them on the streets within the area, which is objectionable to neighbors.

In today's economic climate and reality, their services are critical. The work they do meets the needs of those in poverty, those who are homeless, and those who have a lack of access to basic needs.

Listening House is committed to being a good neighbor within their community

Their location in First Lutheran Church is consistent with the mission of places of worship of every

faith. You cannot limit faith-based institutions that respond to the needs of people on the margins!

Please support removing the restrictions that have been placed on Listening House and allow them to help those in our community with most need.

Thank you, Nancy Bader

2265 Youngman Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55116

Dear City Council Members:

We know we have a limit on time at the City Council meeting next Wednesday, and think it is important you know the impact we have on our guests.

This email includes a description of the people and numbers we serve, talks about the services provided, and includes a link to a video that shows the impact of our services on people who come to Listening House.

**Please take time to watch the video as it gives a picture of Listening House that words can't provide.**

### **Who Listening House Serves**

Our attendance in the month of November fell in a range of 38 to 88, with the average being 68.4. The range of October attendance was 35 to 83 with an average of 65. *A limit of 20 people total per day would mean many do not get served.*

Some of Listening House guests are homeless. They spend their overnights at Higher Ground, Union Gospel, on public transit, camping, doubled up, out and about, or a combination. We are a place they can be during the day. Some originate from the East side and stay in this area.

Some of Listening House guest are not homeless. They walk here because it is close to their homes, and they don't want to be home alone during the day. For some who are housed, coming to Listening House serves to curb their isolation and helps them retain their sobriety.

Some are previously homeless, and return to Listening House for support.

Some are working, some are not. One gentleman who comes here regularly works nights, and is experiencing homelessness, so he sleeps here during the day. Another man who stays in a shelter irons his work clothes here.

Some struggle with addiction to drugs or alcohol. Some do not. We do not allow consumption on our property.

Some have mental health issues. Some do not. And not all the mental health issues look the same.

Some have physical health issues. Some do not.

Some grew up in generational poverty. Some did not.

Some come from loving families. Some came from families whose own lives were so complicated; they couldn't love their kids the way they might have hoped.

Our guests come from many faith traditions, or no faith tradition.

Our guest are of every race and ethnicity and gender.

There is no "typical" Listening House guest.

### **What Listening House Offers**

Hospitality. We try to meet people's basic needs. We provide soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, shampoo, wash cloths, and big bathrooms so people can take care attending to themselves – in private, something most of us take for granted. We provide clean socks, and a foot care ministry. We give people shirts and pants and underwear and hats and mittens and jackets and gloves and boots. We assist people with obtaining IDs – *a prerequisite* for entering shelter. We provide bus tokens in exchange for chores, which includes cleaning up around the church property daily and into the wider neighborhood twice each week. We are a place where people play music, or connect with friends to play cards or play chess, or connect with mental health, chemical health and housing case managers from our partner agencies who assist them in making the changes they desire to make in their lives. If people are sick, we get them connected to health care. We give people a place to be during the day. We offer compassion. At Listening House, the coffee is always

hot. The smiles are always ready. We look people in the eye. We call them by name. We give them the gift of being present to their stories. Additionally, we have a men's group called Sports Rewind, and offer other opportunities for creative enrichment, such as creative writing and creative story telling, with plans to add more enrichment opportunities as we move forward. Every week, someone tells me they are getting housing. The people who get housing return to Listening House because this is their community center. At Listening House, we welcome the stranger, comfort the afflicted, give drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, and clothing to those who need it.

#### **Video**

The impact Listening House has on our guests is told here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTJn-46AVus&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTJn-46AVus&feature=em-share_video_user)

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome questions.

Cheryl Peterson  
Executive Director  
Listening House of St. Paul  
464 Maria Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55106

From: "Carole Evans" <[caroleevans@yahoo.com](mailto:caroleevans@yahoo.com)>  
Date: Dec 1, 2017 4:18 PM  
Subject: Listening House  
To: <[council@ci.spaul.mn.us](mailto:council@ci.spaul.mn.us)>  
Cc: <[Cheryl@listeninghouse.org](mailto:Cheryl@listeninghouse.org)>, <[Dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

I am writing this letter because I am a volunteer at Listening House. I have volunteered at Listening House for many years. I am concerned for the future of Listening House when I hear that we may not serve as many guests or be removed from its present location. I love the guests at Listening House and have been touched by their tenacity in making a difficult situation work for them. I have seen changed lives. Recently I heard 2 stories from guests who have experienced positive changes in their lives thanks to this organization. One said First Lutheran was the church he was raised in and now he was coming full circle! The other guest was recognizably changed. He was less stressed and his calmness was very noticeable. His face registered a demeanor that I had never seen before. He credited the change to Listening House. I am praying that we will be able to stay at First Lutheran as I see it as a wonderful environment for these dear people I have come to love, respect and serve.

Carole M. Evans

From: Mary Jean Mulherin [<mailto:mjmulherin@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Saturday, December 02, 2017 11:53 AM

To: #CI-StPaul\_Ward3; Chris Tolbert

Subject: Listening House before City Council on December 6

The St Paul Planning Commission's decision to limit the number of guests who may enter Listening House has been appealed by Listening House and is an item on the City Council agenda on December 6.

As a St Paul resident and taxpayer living in Ward 3, and a former Listening House volunteer, I urge the Council to support the mission of Listening House in our community.

On a recent day I visited at Listening House and found the guests calmly talking, resting, enjoying coffee and bakery items. I saw no signs of disturbance to others and no disturbance to the surrounding neighborhood.

I urge the Council to vote "No." on limiting the number of guests to 20 on any given day at Listening House. *Listening House's mission is about hospitality and hospitality is not a limiting activity.* Hospitality welcomes the stranger. While this may be a foreign concept in a world that promotes fear of "the other," it is the basic tenet of many religions.

Many more than 20 men and women come as guests to Listening House on any given day, which is indicative of human need: for comfort, for safety, for food, and for fellowship. Turning away Person #21 makes no sense in the context of providing hospitality. I trust Listening House staff's dedication to both those they serve and to the neighborhood they operate within.

It might be easy to just rubber stamp the Planning Commission's decision, but as the City Council you have the final say. I urge members of the Council to allow Listening House to continue providing hospitality to all who show up at their door. Our sisters and brothers need to feel the love of our wider community and the wider community needs to acknowledge our sisters and brothers in need of hospitality.

From poem by *Thomas Merton, Trappist Monk*

"Into this world, this demented inn  
in which there is absolutely no room for him at all,  
Christ comes uninvited.  
But because he cannot be at home in it,  
because he is out of place in it,  
and yet he must be in it,  
His place is with the others for whom  
there is no room.  
His place is with those who do not belong,  
who are rejected by power, because  
they are regarded as weak,  
those who are discredited,  
who are denied status of persons."

Respectfully,

Mary Jean Mulherin

1181 Edgcumbe Rd #203

St Paul MN 55105

Subject: Sister Florence Steichen - Listening House

Sister Florence Steichen called as a W3 constituent saying she hopes you will vote in support of Listening House to continue to provide their services without any limits.

Sister Susan Hames w/ Carondolet Village called C/M Tolbert urging him to allow Listening House more than 20 and to not limit the number of folks they can assist. The church can serve more than 20, and the church will also serve the community.

Sister Carolyn Puccio w/ Carondolet Village called C/M Tolbert asking him to allow Listening House to determine themselves the number of people they can provide for and not limit them to 20.

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

St Paul City Council,

I am writing today in support of the work and care that is happening through a recent partnership between First Lutheran Church and Listening House. As a fellow Pastor on the east side of St Paul at Our Redeemer Lutheran, I am aware of the many ways our churches get invited to help shape our communities in ways that matter to everyone. Having just hosted a month long stay of 6 homeless families in our Sunday School wing I become painfully aware of the struggles and the needs that people in this particular situation face.

As Listening House was not able to remain at their previous location and knowing what an important avenue they are to caring for some of the most vulnerable amongst us, I want to encourage you to give the support necessary to allow work that happens with part of the homeless community to continue to be housed and provided through First Lutheran.

I have been to a community gathering to try and work through concerns and hopes of the local neighbors and feel that both First Lutheran and Listening House have provided information and have addressed issues and concerns in significant ways to help alleviate and address better practices. For some there is no level of work that would ever satisfy their requests and as such need your more formal support and decision around this important and necessary avenue of care for our community.

Pastor Karsten Nelson  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
1390 Larpenteur Ave

Patricia Seiter, a Sister of St. Joseph who lives in Ward 3. She strongly supports Listening House. She is opposed to the City limiting persons served to 20 persons per day.

Agatha Marie Grossman called and said she is not happy with the 20 person limit.

Florence Steichen from Sisters of St Joseph called encouraging CM Bostrom to vote against the 20 person limit for Listening House.

Dear Council Members,

I was utterly dumbfounded when I heard of the proposal to limit Listening House to serving only 20 guests per day. This seems to me the polar opposite of a humane or realistic approach to poverty in our community.

I visited Listening House last week to observe the situation for myself. I saw no one in the street, parking lot or adjacent neighborhood. Inside, volunteers served food while staff spoke with guests. The atmosphere was relaxed and comfortable. A conversation with staff left me impressed by their compassion, knowledge and dedication, as well as the array of services provided. Back outside, a guy unlocked his bike and rode away. Another paused briefly on the stoop, but had gone inside by the time I drove away.

A thing I noticed while inside was that a number of guests were people of color, and I had to wonder if that is part of what (a) calls attention to their presence as they pass by, and (b) whether consciously or unconsciously, elicits fear or discomfort in neighbors--some of whom may have little experience (beyond media images) with people who look different from themselves or are perceived as "other."

The rationale that the neighborhood can be somehow improved by preventing those in need from being served *inside* is sadly misconceived.

Listening House is a safe, welcoming haven where people in need are treated with dignity and given not only food and necessities, but also access to life-changing services. It seems obvious to me that *keeping out* the majority of those who had previously been served *inside* can only lead to problems: for the community as well as for the people who would no longer have a place to get the help they need. I support allowing Listening House to continue current operations.

I understand that Listening House has reached out to neighbors, with only one accepting the invitation to come in and learn more. It seems to me that the motion to limit guests is based on fear rather than knowledge *or* any earnest attempts to bridge the gulf.

As a St. Paul resident and taxpayer living in Ward 2,

I urge you to do everything possible to encourage communication and cooperation *on both sides* as the means to resolve complaints and concerns. Without a good faith effort at this process, it is premature to impose limits on Listening House.

Sincerely,

Jyni Koschak  
199 W. Stevens St.

December 4, 2017

St. Paul City Council  
c/o Russ Stark, President  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West

310 City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Fellow Leaders,

I serve as the Bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which includes well over 100,000 baptized members, belonging to congregations in Ramsey, Washington, Chisago and Dakota Counties. Two dozen of those communities of faith are within the City of Saint Paul.

One of our deepest convictions as Christians is the call to reach out to befriend and protect our neighbors, especially those who are frail or facing economic hardships. The work of Listening House, located at First Lutheran Church in Saint Paul, is an eloquent example of that kind of outreach ministry, which occurs in congregations all across this city. A friendly welcome is offered, meals are shared, clothing and other resources are provided, referrals are made to community services not just on Sunday but throughout the days of the week.

As Bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod I am concerned by any zoning decision that would limit the ability of a congregation to put its faith into action by constricting the size of groups that could gather or layering additional behavioral requirements on participants in such activities, beyond those presently in place for all citizens.

Our strength as a city depends upon partnerships between the public, private and religious sectors. Several ELCA congregations within the City of St. Paul are host to non-profit organizations that amplify the work and witness of the congregation. Open Hands at Bethlehem-in-the-Midway, Daily Work at Christ on Capitol Hill, and the Alley Shoppe at Arlington Hills are three examples that come readily to mind. Alongside the Wellness Center at First Lutheran, these are all ministries that illustrate a commitment similar to that of Listening House where faith is put into action by a religious community.

I will attend the City Council meeting on December 6, 2017 when you will hear an appeal of the decision of the Saint Paul Planning Commission concerning Listening House. I will be eager to hear your deliberations on this matter.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Patricia J. Lull, Bishop

Dear Russ Stark, St. Paul City Council President and City Council Members:

I am a Consociate (a lay member who carries out the mission) of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet St. Paul Province. I am also an Associate Professor in the Master of Arts in Holistic Health Studies at St. Catherine University, where many of our students have and are experiencing homelessness. In fact, my graduate research assistant with whom I currently work is one of the brightest students I have ever worked with and she was homeless for a significant period of time in her undergraduate work. Her experiences have heightened my awareness of and advocacy for respectful treatment of the homeless.



I am deeply concerned about the restriction placed on Listening House to limit their services to 20 people experiencing homelessness per day by the City's Planning Commission. Listening House provides an essential service to people experiencing homelessness. I think about what it would be like on this cold snowy December day to say to the 21st person seeking shelter that, "I'm sorry, we're full and you have to stay outside today because the Planning Commission determined an arbitrary number of people that we could serve." What we know is that there is a 22% surge in homeless in Ramsey County this year, with many of them being children. Please reconsider this action at your meeting tomorrow. I will be watching for the outcome.

Sincerely,

Carol C. Geisler, Ph.D.

Dear Council Members:

It has come to my attention that Listening House has had restrictions placed on the number of visitors that it is allowed to serve. This seriously affects the excellent work that they do with our homeless neighbors. Times like these call for more compassion from us all, not less.

Listening House wants to be a good neighbor and is more than willing to work towards that end. Please remove these unnecessary restrictions and allow them to continue their vital work. Remember that, in the words of Paul Wellstone, we all do better when we all do better.

Ann Tucker  
1998 Goodrich Ave.

Please vote to allow Listening House to serve more than 20 people a day. There are many people who need warmth, food and warm clothes. Also they need a place where they can be with others to talk, share and support one another.

Bobbie Murphy

1988 Goodrich

Dear St. Paul City Council,

My name is Marina Kelly and I am a second year Master's of Human Rights student at the University of Minnesota. I am writing to you as a St. Paul resident and a supporter of the Listening House. I have been a volunteer at Listening House for one year and my grandfather was a long-time volunteer before me. We see the services Listening House provides to members of our community as invaluable and as such choose to support their work. The relocation of Listening House does not change the value of their work nor does it mean they should be limited in the services they provide. If unreasonable and arbitrary conditions such as the 20 visitor daily cap are imposed on this organization they will be unable to carry out their mission to serve as a day shelter and community center providing hospitality, practical assistance and guidance to men and women who are disadvantaged, homeless or lonely. I will draw on

international human rights law to explain why Listening House's work is vital to upholding and advancing the basic human rights of people who have been historically and systematically criminalized and discriminated against.

I recommend the City of St. Paul use a human rights based approach in their future decisions regarding the operations of Listening House. Dayton's Bluffs residents have complained of being "taunted [...] as 'godless,' 'lacking in compassion,' and Nazis'"<sup>1</sup> as a result of their opposition to the presence of Listening House. The benefit of taking a human rights approach to this issue is that it "undermines 'moral' explanations of homelessness as personal failures to be solved with acts of charity and instead reveals patterns of inequality and injustice that deny those who are homeless their rights to be equal members of society."<sup>2</sup> Further, a human rights approach "understands that homelessness may be linked to individual dynamics," but also addresses "the overarching structural and institutional causes of homelessness – the cumulative effect of domestic policies, programmes and legislation, as well as international financial and development agreements that contribute to and create homelessness."<sup>3</sup> Thus, taking such an approach allows us to move beyond categorizing this debate as a moral one of good people versus bad people to focusing on combatting the structural causes that lie at the root of the issues aggravating Dayton's Bluffs neighbors.

#### *More than a right to housing issue*

The debate at hand is not solely a right to housing issue as all human rights are indivisible and interconnected, but rather this is a matter of protecting and supporting the positive actions performed by Listening House that facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights by people experiencing homelessness. Of the international human rights laws in which these rights are enshrined and that I will be discussing, the United States has only ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Although these treaties are not independently enforceable in domestic courts, ratified international treaties have the same force as federal law under the U.S. Constitution and can be used to guide domestic legal arguments.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the treaties that the United States has not yet ratified are internationally recognized and respected standards and legal documents and should still be considered in discussions on related issues. In fact, several cities in the United States are doing just that. These cities are called "human rights cities" because they refer "explicitly to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards and/or law in their policies, statements, and programs. [...] Because of their focus on local contexts, human rights cities tend to emphasize economic, social, and

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<sup>1</sup> Sage Holben, "View From My Porch," *Dayton's Bluff District Forum*, November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context* (A/HRC/31/54, Geneva, December 30, 2015), 6.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and National Coalition for the Homeless, *Homes Not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (July 2009), [http://timefolds.com/nch/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CrimzReport\\_2009.pdf](http://timefolds.com/nch/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CrimzReport_2009.pdf).

cultural rights as they affect the lives of residents of cities and other communities.”<sup>5</sup> Minnesota’s own city of Edina declared itself a Human Rights City through the Edina City Council in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the following are not unreasonable standards for St. Paul to hold itself to and to be held accountable to by its residents.

The right to housing is enshrined in several pieces of international human rights law. The United States played a key role in developing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a non-binding article of soft law, which addresses the right to housing in Article 25: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”<sup>7</sup> This article defines housing as an integral part of an adequate standard of living. The ICERD, which the United States has ratified, mandates the guarantee of the right to housing to everyone, free from discrimination, in Article 5(d)(iii). The most important international law on the right to housing is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 11 of the ICESCR states, “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.” The United States is one of the few countries that has not ratified the covenant, meaning it is not legally bound by its contents; 166 states are currently parties to the ICESCR.<sup>8</sup> However, the United States has signed the ICESCR and it is not unreasonable to expect that we will someday ratify it. When states sign on to international treaties they are required to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights outlined in the treaty. In the Listening House case, the obligation to respect is the most applicable, which “means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights.”<sup>9</sup> By placing arbitrary restrictions on the operations of Listening House, Minnesota’s state government, as a part of the United States federal government, is both interfering with and curtailing the enjoyment of the human rights of the visitors to Listening House.

Although Listening House itself does not provide housing, it does provide shelter from 9 am to 4:15 pm three days a week and from 9 am to 11:30 am two days a week. This refuge is especially important during the long Minnesota winters; while some shelters are open during the same time, they all have

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<sup>5</sup> US Human Rights Network, “National Human Rights Cities Alliance,” accessed November 23, 2017, <https://www.ushrnetwork.org/our-work/project/national-human-rights-cities-alliance>.

<sup>6</sup> Barb Sieminski, “Edina, Minn. Residents enjoy a high quality of life,” *The Municipal*, October 25, 2016, <http://www.themunicipal.com/2016/10/edina-minn-residents-enjoy-a-high-quality-of-life/>.

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, “Universal declaration of human rights” (217 [III] A, Paris, 1948), <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Status of Ratification,” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, November 6, 2017, <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> “International Human Rights Law,” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, accessed November 23, 2017, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/InternationalLaw.aspx>.

capacity limitations. As such, Listening House directly contributes to the right to housing by providing a safe and warm place for people to stay before overnight shelters open for the evening. Additionally, Listening House staff helps guests apply for housing and communicates with caseworkers on behalf of the guests regarding housing. It is important to note here as well that the international community is attuned to the plight of homeless people in the United States who are dangerously exposed to harsh weather conditions because of their housing status; at the eighty-seventh session of the Human Rights Committee, the United States was directly questioned about the death of 21 homeless people in Arizona during a heatwave.<sup>10</sup> For the most developed country in the world to not have had sufficient protection measures in place to prevent such a disaster is an embarrassment, and the United States is lucky Minnesota has not yet been called out on the international stage for the deaths of people experiencing homelessness due to exposure to the cold.

As mentioned earlier, one of the basic principles of the human rights framework is that human rights are indivisible and interconnected, meaning the violation of one right impairs one's ability to enjoy other rights. In addition to violating the right to housing, homelessness also violates the right to non-discrimination.<sup>11</sup> On the right to non-discrimination, African Americans and American Indians face a disproportionate risk of homelessness in Minnesota; African Americans make up 39% of Minnesota's homeless adults, but only 5% of adults statewide, and American Indians make up 8% of homeless adults in Minnesota but only 1% of adults statewide.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, nearly half of the population Listening House serves is African American. Thus, measures taken to limit Listening House's ability to operate are de facto discriminatory, and will serve to entrench structural and historically generated discrimination.<sup>13</sup> Further, any action taken against Listening House based on complaints of homeless people living in public spaces, loitering, or even public intoxication may be violating "human rights law as it would discriminate against homeless persons on the basis of their homeless and/or racial status," particularly if this action is taken in a selective manner.<sup>14</sup> This violation would fall under the ICCPR, the UDHR, and also the ICERD if the action has a "disparate impact on homeless individuals who are African-American," which it most certainly would as nearly 50% of Listening House's constituents are African-American.<sup>15</sup> Further, it should be noted that "laws that target homeless people living in public spaces violate their human right to freedom of movement by keeping them out of certain areas or forcing them to move to other spaces in a city."<sup>16</sup>

Listening House also contributes to the enjoyment of the right to adequate clothing. Every Thursday in emergency situations Listening House offers seasonal-appropriate clothing to guests and also offers clean socks daily as well as gloves, scarves, and hats as available. Basic clothing items are often stolen on the streets or lost, so this service is critical. Additionally, Listening House washes laundry for two

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Human Rights Committee, *Summary record of the 2380<sup>th</sup> meeting* (CCPR/C/SR.2380, Geneva, July 27, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing*.

<sup>12</sup> Wilder Research, "Homelessness in Minnesota."

<sup>13</sup> National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, *"Simply Unacceptable": Homelessness and the Human Right to Housing In the United States 2011* (June 2011), [https://www.nlchp.org/documents/Simply\\_Unacceptable](https://www.nlchp.org/documents/Simply_Unacceptable).

<sup>14</sup> National Law Center, *Homes Not Handcuffs*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

people daily. The right to adequate clothing is enshrined in Article 11 of the ICESCR as well as Article 25 of the UDHR, linked with the right to adequate housing and standard of living more broadly. If limits are placed on the number of people who can enter Listening House each day, people who would otherwise be guests at Listening House will almost certainly end up outside without weather-appropriate clothing, exposing them to health risks and even death.

Listening House also offers work assistance in the form of job application help; providing laptops to submit job applications; bus tokens to get to work in exchange for completing chores; job-appropriate clothing. Article 23 of the UDHR and Articles 6 and 7 of the ICESCR address the right to work, which is not achievable without the aforementioned services. For example, if someone does not have access to a computer, they cannot apply for a job; if they cannot afford the bus fare they cannot get to work; if they do not have dress clothes for office jobs or industrial shoes for manual labor they will not be adequately dressed for work, etc. Article 13 of the UDHR, Article 12 of the ICCPR, and Article 5 of the ICERD also highlight the freedom of movement, which is facilitated by the aforementioned bus tokens Listening House makes available to guests in exchange for completing cleaning chores and in cases of emergency.

Listening House provides assistance acquiring identification such as birth certificates, state IDs, and driver's licenses. This assistance is crucial to the enjoyment of rights such as the right to work. Further, nearly all homeless shelters in the Twin Cities require some sort of identification to enter; Listening House is one of the few that does not. This means that for undocumented homeless persons who cannot get legal U.S. identification, Listening House is one of the few shelters they can even access. Further, as Listening House does not provide overnight services, their assistance in obtaining identification also creates the possibility of enjoying overnight shelter elsewhere. Other shelters also certainly provide additional services enabling the enjoyment of basic human rights, but without identification homeless persons are barred from this assistance as well.

I would like to elaborate on how Listening House helps uphold the right to food. The right to food is protected in Article 25 of the UDHR as part of an adequate standard of living; in Article 11 of the ICESCR; in Articles 24 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and in Article 11 of the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man.<sup>17</sup> The food Listening House distributes is donated, so its nutritious quality may vary; some mornings mostly pastries will be served, while on other days there will be freshly-made, nutrient-rich lunches. Regardless, many guests look to Listening House as their main source of sustenance, especially those who cannot obtain identification. Further limiting people's access to food by way of limiting their access to Listening House infringes on their right to food, which also negatively impacts the enjoyment of the right to health and other rights.

Listening House also provides vitamins and over the counter cough and pain medicine, first aid, hygiene kits, and feminine hygiene products, thereby contributing to the right to health. The right to health is protected in Article 25 of the UDHR; Article 12 of the ICESCR; Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 5 of the ICERD; Articles 12 and 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Article 11 of the American Declaration on Rights and Duties of Man;

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<sup>17</sup> "What is the Human Right to Food?" *National Economic and Social Rights Initiative*, accessed on November 23, 2017, <https://www.nesri.org/programs/what-is-the-human-right-to-food>.

and Article 25 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>18</sup> As outlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the right to health is not the right to be healthy, but rather the “right to the enjoyment of a variety of facilities, goods, services and conditions necessary for the realization of the highest attainable standard of health.”<sup>19</sup> The components of the right to health are several, including: the right to appropriate health care; the right to an adequate supply of water, food, nutrition and housing; the right to a healthy environment and healthy working conditions; the right to maternal, child and reproductive health; the right to participate in health-related decision-making; and the right to access health-related information.<sup>20</sup> Obviously, the limited health services Listening House provides do not address all of these components, but Listening House serves as an available, acceptable, and accessible first stop for free and quality everyday health needs, which is a critical role in upholding the right to health.

Lastly, a major tenet of the human rights framework is participation, meaning that people should have a role in decisions that affect their rights, including up to the government level.<sup>21</sup> State parties to the ICCPR, which the United States is, are required to adopt and implement strategies to address homelessness in consultation with, and with participation by, homeless people.<sup>22</sup> If for whatever reason this is not possible, the large number of people who seek services from Listening House should serve as a testament to the value they see in this organization and its ability to help meet their needs. On this topic, I encourage you to watch the following video which includes testimony from Listening House guests: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTJn-46AVus>.

#### *Criminalization of homelessness: the Listening House case*

The arbitrary and restrictive conditions currently placed on Listening House that are under appeal, as well as the basis of the neighborhood appeal of the zoning condition, epitomize the criminalization of homelessness, which is nationally and internationally denounced. Criminalization of homelessness falls under one of the seven core elements of the right to housing, security of tenure, which means all persons “should possess legal protection against forced eviction and harassment.”<sup>23</sup> The narrative opposing the operating location of Listening House has been largely based on the stigmatization, social

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<sup>18</sup> “What is the Human Right to Health and Health Care?” *National Economic and Social Rights Initiative*, accessed on November 23, 2017, <https://www.nesri.org/programs/what-is-the-human-right-to-health-and-health-care>.

<sup>19</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *CESR General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12)*, (E/C.12/2000/4, August, 11, 2000), <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d0.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, “Human Right to Health Info Sheet no. 1” (Fact sheet, January 2008), [https://www.nesri.org/sites/default/files/Right\\_to\\_Health.pdf](https://www.nesri.org/sites/default/files/Right_to_Health.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> “What are the Basic Principles of the Human Rights Framework?” *National Economic and Social Rights Initiative*, accessed on November 23, 2017, <https://www.nesri.org/programs/what-are-the-basic-principles-of-the-human-rights-framework>.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing*.

<sup>23</sup> National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, “Simply Unacceptable.”

exclusion and criminalization of people experiencing homelessness. For example, some residents in the area surrounding Listening House have blamed guests for “public intoxication, day drinking, daytime drug use, drug dealing behaviors, car break ins, property damage, assaults, and other incidents requiring police calls.”<sup>24</sup> However, these claims can be likened to rationales for national and local laws criminalizing homelessness; UN Special Rapporteur on housing Leilani Farha noted in her 2016 report on such laws that they are “often framed under the guise of public health and safety but, in reality, the aim is to ‘beautify’ an area for the promotion of tourism and business or to increase property values.”<sup>25</sup>

Further, the appeal of the zoning decision submitted by Dayton’s Bluff residents includes several pictures and statements complaining about people sleeping or sitting outside in public spaces. In 2014, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about “the criminalization of homelessness [in the United States] through laws that prohibit activities such as loitering, camping, begging and lying down in public spaces.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the Human Rights Committee also expressed concern about the “criminalization of people [in the United States] living on the street for everyday activities such as eating, sleeping, sitting in particular areas, etc.,” which raised concerns for the committee regarding “discrimination and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”<sup>27</sup>

Nationally, in 2015 the Department of Justice filed a statement of interest arguing that the criminalization of sleeping in public is a violation of the U.S. Constitution when there is insufficient shelter space in the city.<sup>28</sup> The statement was filed in response to the *Bell v. City of Boise et al.* case and “relied on Supreme Court precedent, holding that to convict a person of a crime based on his or her status amounts to cruel and unusual punishment is in violation of the Eighth Amendment.”<sup>29</sup> This is the case in St. Paul, evidenced by the following statement from Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough: “With vacancies in affordable housing at an all-time low, increasing rents and stagnant incomes, it is harder than ever for individuals living on lower incomes to find affordable, safe and long-term housing.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Zoning Committee Staff Report.”

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of the United States of America* (CERD/C/USA/CO/7-9, September 25, 2014), 5, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/235644.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the United States of America* (CCPR/C/USA/CO/4, Geneva, April 23, 2014), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Pamela Hamamoto, “USA” (February 4, 2016).

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Homelessness/States/USA.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Jessie Van Berkel, “Emergency winter shelter opens in St. Paul as number of homeless people climbs.” *Star Tribune* (St. Paul, MN), November 19, 2017. <http://www.startribune.com/emergency-winter-shelter-opens-in-st-paul-as-number-of-homeless-people-climbs/458693373/>



Federal programs that help Americans living in poverty find housing require the tenant to put 30% of their income toward rent. However, this 30% metric was adopted more than 50 years ago shortly after the federal public housing program was created in 1937 and may not be an appropriate standard anymore given the passing of time.<sup>31</sup> Regardless, this is still the standard in place, and according to this threshold, more than 80% of households in the Twin Cities making less than \$20,000 per year pay more than 30% of their income in housing costs.<sup>32</sup> This can be compared to the 4% of households with a yearly income of \$75,000 or greater that pay more than 30% of income in housing costs.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, households earning between \$20,00 and \$34,999 annually have seen their ability to afford housing decline in recent years; 72% of households with this income range were paying more than 30% of their income toward housing in 2016.<sup>34</sup> Another explanation for the lack of affordable housing in the Twin Cities is the increase in the number of renter households in nearly all income groups. For example, between 2010 and 2014 the number of renting households with an annual income of \$50,000 or greater increased by 27,000.<sup>35</sup> Executive Director of the Minnesota Housing Partnership Chip Halbach explained that many of these high-income renters may not be buying homes because of a lack of starter homes available and an increase in landlords renovating rentals that in other circumstances would be aging and becoming naturally less expensive.<sup>36</sup> The result is an increase in the price in existing rentals and the construction of similarly expensive new rentals. In 2015 the average Twin Cities rent was around \$1,046 per month, which was “\$130 more than the median renter could afford” and the rental vacancy rate was 2% below the 5% rate commonly used to characterize a “healthy housing market.”<sup>37</sup> In light of these statistics and national and international discussions around the issue, the St. Paul City Council should discourage the suspicious treatment and criminalization of people sitting and sleeping outside, regardless of whether or not the person is a Listening House guest.

### *Conclusion*

In the struggle to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights, Listening House should be seen as an ally, not an enemy. Listening House helps people experiencing homelessness enjoy basic human rights that they would otherwise be lacking, and as such serves as an entity assisting the state in upholding its human rights obligations. The government funding given to Listening House further evidences this; in 2016, 9% of the Listening House budget came from the government.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, due to the nature of its work, Listening House is an organizational human rights defender. The United States vehemently opposes attacks on human rights defenders abroad, so it is nonsensical that this would change at home.

This does not mean, however, that I am against the Dayton’s Bluffs residents acting on what they feel are threats to their personal safety. Rather, I think this is a misunderstanding about which responsibilities belong to Listening House and which belong to the state. The public safety of the

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<sup>31</sup> Greta Kaul, “Is there – or is there not – an affordable housing crisis in the Twin Cities,” *MinnPost* (Minneapolis, MN), October 4, 2017, <https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2017/10/there-or-there-not-affordable-housing-crisis-twin-cities>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Rosemarie Reger-Rumsey, “Listening House of St. Paul, Inc 2016 Annual Financial Report,” <http://listeninghouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2016-Annual-Report-2.pdf>.



neighborhood is the state's responsibility, the onus is not on Listening House to hire private security guards; if residents feel that public transit is not accessible to low-income people – people who may also use Listening House services – then they should be lobbying the state to improve public transit access.

What should be a discussion about the overarching structural and institutional causes of homelessness and the responsibilities of the state of Minnesota has largely turned into a personal matter, distracting from the essential services Listening House provides to help marginalized people in Minnesota enjoy the basic human rights they are entitled to. I strongly encourage the St. Paul City Council to do everything in its power to lift the arbitrary, poorly conceived restrictions placed on Listening House and to express its strong support of this organization and the invaluable services it provides to members of our community.

Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me with any questions at 651-226-0200 or [kell1206@umn.edu](mailto:kell1206@umn.edu).

Sincerely,  
Marina Kelly

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Dear Councilmember,

I write in support of Listening House, and First Lutheran Church, concerning the objections of some neighbors of First Lutheran Church to Listening House's operations in the First Lutheran Church, and some of the conditions issued by the Zoning and Planning Commission decisions.

I ask that the City Council uphold the Planning Commission's decision rejecting the Lerna appeal, and modify the conditions imposed by the Planning Commission as requested by Listening House.

The Planning Commission's order attempts to appease both sides, by attempting to allow Listening House to continue while imposing conditions ostensibly designed to appease the concerns of the neighbors who object to Listening House being located in and operating out of First Lutheran Church. It does not accomplish this result. The conditions advocated by Rene and Kim Lerma and adopted by the Planning Commission may seem reasonable, to some, on their face, but they are designed to strangle Listening House's operations, and affect First Lutheran Church's ability to make reasonable decisions about betterment of its property.

For example, the condition that would limit the number of guests to 20 per day, is unworkable, inconsistent with the purpose of Listening House, and appears to be intended to slowly strangle Listening House's operations. Similarly, the prohibition of having or using an outdoor patio interferes with First Lutheran Church's legitimate use of its property.

Let us be clear. The Lerma's and other neighbors associated with them, will not be satisfied until Listening House is no longer present at First Lutheran. They do not represent all the neighbors in the vicinity. And, they do not represent the interests of all St. Paul residents.

Testimony and written statements by people who have noticed and experienced an increase in the number of encounters in the vicinity with individuals apparently experiencing homelessness are heartfelt. The "blame" for this cannot be laid at the presence of Listening House. The increase of homelessness in St. Paul and the metro area generally is well-documented. In fact, Ramsey County just this past week opened a winter shelter facility, to partially meet the need for safe places for people to be during harsh winter nights. Listening House's presence at First Lutheran did not cause the increase, nor would closing Listening House eliminate the number of people experiencing homelessness in the vicinity.

While the location of Listening House and First Lutheran Church is in an East Side community, it is a parking lot away from a Burger King and the busy East 7<sup>th</sup> Street thoroughfare, across the street from Metro State University—in other words, it is not a building surrounded on all sides by single family homes. On one side of First Lutheran stand lovely single-family homes, and on the other side, East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and the commercial, educational, and other enterprises that bring people from all parts of the metro area to the community.

Other activities occur at the next building—Norelius Hall—throughout the day, on Wednesday nights for Wellness, and at various other times during evenings and weekends. These are all legitimate and ongoing activities that have continued for some time without objection. Listening House came into this constellation of activities, operating only between 9 AM and 5 PM on weekdays. This is not a significant change or departure from the other activities that have been underway.

Both Listening House and First Lutheran Church have tried to work with the objecting neighbors, to minimize objectionable behaviors, frequently clean the environs, respond to reasonable requests for barriers, educate the guests regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior and respecting the property and expectations of the neighbors. As evidenced by their submissions, both Listening House and First Lutheran Church are committed to be good neighbors, and I am convinced they are both committed to continuing to endeavor to be good neighbors. They are working in good faith to find the best way forward, to continue their missions while meeting the objecting neighbors' concerns as much as possible.

First Lutheran Church is committed to reach outside the walls of the sanctuary, to address the needs of the community around it. I am proud to be a FLC member, in large part because of this

commitment. And, as we should all be aware, said, "If you have a church (or other place of worship) in your area, you should expect to see poor people served there."

The city of St. Paul, and the people who come to Listening House, need this daytime place of refuge, respect, and service.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,

Deborah Huskins

Member, First Lutheran Church

2624 Windsor Lane

Woodbury, MN 55125

To City Council Members

Subject: Listening Room

Resident: Ann Idzik

I wish to protest the concept of allowing only 20 people into Listening Room at the First Lutheran church. Rather it should be a welcoming place.

It is a living room for the Homeless. I suggest the residents visit the Listening Room and get to meet some of the clients. With homelessness increasing in St Paul, and more and more middle class individuals find themselves homeless, it is imperative that our community find ways to work together across sectors and systems to create a community where everyone looks after one another. There's valuable talent and resources among the homeless. I challenge the neighbors to welcome these individuals, invite them to work together to participate in making this a welcoming place. A committee of homeless and residents could identify ways to create a community that inspires and challenges. A place where people of all races and backgrounds can care for one another. To become a model of a community caring for one another. This would be an extraordinary model for St. Paul.

I've included links to two recent Star Tribune articles on Twin Cities Homelessness for your reference:

<http://www.twincities.com/2017/10/28/ramsey-county-homeless-mn-months-in-motels-a-pricey-last-resort/>

<http://www.startribune.com/twin-cities-homelessness-seniors-find-themselves-on-street-in-shelters/450837373/>

December 3, 2017

Russ Stark, St. Paul City Council President

310-D City Hall

15 Kellogg Blvd. West

St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

Dear Russ Stark, St. Paul City Council President, and ALL City Council Members:

We the following Rochester, Minnesota, Sisters of St. Francis and lay members (Cojourners) living in the Twin Cities are concerned by the restriction placed on Listening House to ONLY serve twenty (20) people experiencing homelessness per day by the City's Planning Commission. This arbitrary limitation was placed upon Listening House as a major condition of their use permit to offer services to the homeless at their new site in the basement of First Lutheran Church in the Swede Hollow Neighborhood. This restriction came months after Listening House properly applied and was granted permission by the

City's Planning Office Staff to provide services to people experiencing homelessness in accord with the mission of the church at this new location. We believe that Listening House's location in First Lutheran Church is consistent with the mission of places of worship of every faith. We would hope that the City would collaborate with and support faith-based institutions, like the Sisters of St. Francis, First Lutheran Church, and Listening House, in responding to the needs of people in our St. Paul community that are the most vulnerable.

We also feel that the services Listening House provides are critical to meeting the needs of people who experience poverty, homelessness, and a lack of access to basic needs at this time especially as we enter the cold winter season. Furthermore, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported on October 28 that there is a 22% surge in homelessness in Ramsey County this year. We know that the issue of homelessness is a community problem which faith communities, the City of St. Paul, and public service agencies must all work together to address.

We hope that you, Council President Stark, and Council members, will publicly support a long-term and peaceful resolution to the Determination for Similar Use (DSU) for Listening House of St. Paul while also boldly meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness in the city. Please remove the limitation placed on Listening House to serve only 20 homeless guests per day at the December 6 City Council Meeting.

Sincerely,

Sister Betty Kenny, OSF (Primary Contact) 2060 Charlton St., #208, St. Paul, MN 55118  
Cojourner Sue Hoisington  
Cojourner Joanne Kellen  
Cojourner Ginger Baldus  
Sister Marilyn Blesius, OSF  
Cojourner Shirley Rowley  
Sister Joyce Stemper, OSF  
Sister Judy Chiodo, OSF  
Cojourner Mary Huettl

**From:** Carole Evans <[caroleevans@yahoo.com](mailto:caroleevans@yahoo.com)>

**Date:** December 1, 2017 at 4:18:21 PM CST

**To:** [council@ci.spaul.mn.us](mailto:council@ci.spaul.mn.us)

**Cc:** [Cheryl@listeninghouse.org](mailto:Cheryl@listeninghouse.org), [Dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

**Subject:** Listening House

I am writing this letter because I am a volunteer at Listening House. I have volunteered at Listening House for many years. I am concerned for the future of Listening House when I hear that we may not serve as many guests or be removed from its present location. I love the guests at Listening House and have been touched by their tenacity in making a difficult situation work for them. I have seen changed lives. Recently I heard 2 stories from guests who have experienced positive changes in their lives thanks to this organization. One said First Lutheran was the church he was raised in and now he was coming full circle! The other guest was recognizably changed. He was less stressed and his calmness was very noticeable. His face registered a demeanor that I had never seen before. He credited the change to Listening House. I am praying that we will be able to stay at First Lutheran as I see it as a wonderful environment for these dear people I have come to love, respect and serve.

Carole M. Evans

Dear Russ Stark, St. Paul City Council President and all City Council Members:

As a resident of St. Paul, I am very concerned by the restriction placed on Listening House to ONLY serve twenty (20) people experiencing homelessness per day by the City's Planning Commission. I volunteer and try to do my small part to assist the homeless in the St. Paul Community by giving of my time and resources in what-ever way I can to address this critical need. There has been a lot of media attention the past few weeks to the "surge" in homelessness in Ramsey County this year, and I am worried that placing limitations on Listening House does not help us to collectively and collaboratively address the issues of homelessness in our city. Homelessness is a community problem which neighborhoods, faith communities, the City of St. Paul, volunteers like myself, and public service agencies must all work together to find a solution. If the Planning Commission's limitation would force Listen House to turn away numerous guests each day, I would be concerned that this would only force more homeless people to linger in the Swede Hollow community and further increase tensions and problems for everyone. Secondly, I do not see that arbitrary limiting the number of guests at Listening House is the moral and faithfilled response to this need in our community. I firmly believe there are solutions that can address concerns of the Swede Hollow community while also adequately responding to the surge in need of people experiencing homelessness in our beloved city. I believe that Listening House has demonstrated good faith and concern for the Swede Hollow community by already making adjustments to their services in response to concerns raised at community meetings.

I do not see how this limitation will benefit truly benefit the community in Swede Hollow, benefit people experiencing homelessness, and ultimately benefit the St. Paul community as a whole. I do believe that Listening House service to those experiencing homelessness in our St. Paul Community in First Lutheran Church basement is consistent with the mission of places of worship of every faith. I am very concerned that this limitation on Listening House does not seem consistent with the "work" and outreach of faith communities like First Lutheran Church where Listening House is now residing.

I hope that you, and the members of the City Council, will work for peaceful resolution to the Determination for Similar Use (DSU) for Listening House of St. Paul while also boldly meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our city and address the concerns of Swede Hollow residents as well. I ask you to please remove the limitations placed on Listening House to serve only 20 homeless guests per day at the Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> City Council Meeting.

Thank you, Marty

**Marty Roers**  
Co-Director  
Justice Office



**SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH OF CARONDELET**

1884 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105

D: 651-690-7054 | F: 651-690-7089

[www.csjstpaul.org](http://www.csjstpaul.org) | [mroers@csjstpaul.org](mailto:mroers@csjstpaul.org)

From: Florence Steichen <[fmsteichen@gmail.com](mailto:fmsteichen@gmail.com)>  
To: "St.Paul City Council" <[Contact-Council@cistpaul.mn.us](mailto:Contact-Council@cistpaul.mn.us)>  
Cc: Bill Dermody <[Bill.Dermody@cistpaul.mn.us](mailto:Bill.Dermody@cistpaul.mn.us)>

Bcc:

Date: Fri, 1 Dec 2017 14:33:41 -0600

Subject: Listening House

Dear Members of the St. Paul City Council,

I strongly urge you to allow Listening House to continue to welcome guests without a limit of 20 per day. Listening House provides valuable services: a place of warmth and safety, a place where people receive information and support, where they are heard, and experience companionship.

I see Listening House as an expression of St. Paul's embrace of diversity, and compassion for those who are less fortunate. Even if there were no homeless people in St. Paul, Listening House would be an asset to the city.

I fervently hope that you see it this way, too, and will support the fine work of Listening House, without a limit on the number of people it can serve each day.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Sister Florence Steichen, CSJ