

## Regarding appeal of Planning Commission decision on Listening House

Dear St. Paul City Council Members:

I would ask you to consider the conditions brought to Dayton's Bluff by the recent relocation of the Listening House to the campus of First Lutheran Church, [464 Maria Ave](#). Listening House is a low barrier, daytime drop in center for lonely and homeless adults. First Lutheran church is located in an out of the way neighborhood bordered by East Seventh St. and Swede Hollow Park. This area has no through streets, one enters and exits the neighborhood from [7th St](#), so there is very little traffic that is not related to local residents, businesses, or institutions. In short, it is very easy to observe what is happening here.

Immediately prior to opening, and in subsequent meetings, Listening House staff has made it clear they have no plan, and no interest in developing one, to manage the effects of advancing their mission in an RT1 zoned residential area. After nearly 6 months of meetings and negotiations with the Listening House the only concessions they have made is to move a sign from one door to another existing door and agree to remain open for the lunch hour on the 3 weekdays that they are also open for afternoon hours. Since we began meetings and/or negotiations with Listening House we have been subjected to name calling, shaming, and inaccurate depictions by their staff, supporters, stakeholders and First Lutherans management and congregation. While this has been playing out, neighbors have repeatedly been required to push the Listening House staff to acknowledge and take responsibility for their clients' needs, and the impacts those needs present to the adjacent residential community, outside their space and hours of operation (just under 27 hours per week).

Some of Listening House's clients have no respect for the rights of neighbors to the peaceable enjoyment of their homes, yards and neighborhood. The litany of behaviors that we have been exposed to is recognizable to anyone who has had a problem property on their block. We have witnessed public urination, groups of adults hanging around outside the Listening House and creating a hostile environment for passing neighbors, people helping themselves to things in our yards and garages and disrupting local businesses. Loud profanity, fights and obvious intoxication have become routine on and around the Listening House. A new twist to these behaviors is the men who see our porches as places where it is acceptable to hang out at any time of the night or day.

All that we have been asking for, through all of this, is to be allowed to live in a neighborhood with the same level of civility that people expect in any other neighborhood. We all live by rules. There are laws and zoning regulations to ensure that one party cannot negatively impact another. The fact that the Listening House is asking to be exempt from any conditions is clear evidence that they reject any measures that might result in a higher level of compatibility and therefore do not belong in any residential area.

I appreciate the fact that the Listening House's mission is important and the needs of their clients real. Unfortunately, our summer with them is an example of what to expect when that mission is combined with RT1 zoning. Please find a way to relocate the Listening House to a more appropriate location.

Thank you,

Cliff Carey  
635 Bates Avenue

To the City Council Members of St. Paul:

Over the last six months, I have been faced with the uneasy task of choosing between accepting humanitarian efforts for the under privileged in our city, and the safety of my family. When given the choice, I will always choose the safety of my family.

I have been faced with multiple instances of safety concerns with Listening House's arrival in a residential RT-1 district. My wife was followed home by a listening house guest, after following directions to document detrimental impacts (including guests loitering after Listening House hours) from the Sr. Commander of the east side precinct. As I drove to our home with my 6-year old daughter in the vehicle, I witnessed the heated confrontation. When he saw me, he left immediately. The next day after I left for work, my wife told me that he came back and was able to ID the car she drove and obviously where we live. An event like this make me wonder if my wife will be safe when I am not around, as he felt more secure approaching and harassing her alone.

One morning in August, my wife and I were working in our garden, drinking our morning coffee, while our daughter played in the yard, she came running up to the house while we are sitting on the porch and told us that there is a man urinating on our neighbor's lawn across the street. We witnessed the as he urinated in front of my family. Then he and his friend, with beer cans in hand walk into to Listening House. As he approached the building he slid his beer in his back pocket and walked in. The police were called, and no one on staff was able to identify the man we had just seen walk in. The police reported to us they were unable to do anything about it. In this instance, the concern for my daughter not having to witness events such as this is called into play.

Another alarming event occurred while I was at work. I received a text message from my neighbor, which is a photo of a man sitting on my furniture with his feet up on my potted plants relaxing on my front porch. My teenage son rides the bus home from school and is home before my wife or I return home. How am I to ensure that an event such as this does not happen as he is getting home from school and is confronted with a stranger on our private property? If it were not for our neighbor, how would I have known? How would I had been able to be there for my son, should he had been confronted with this situation?

I understand that there are a lot of hypotheticals with these situations, so I will venture to pose one more. How would you feel if this type of lewd and disturbing behavior was at your front door and just a few hundred feet from your home?

I grew up as a boy scout and even earned my Eagle Scout Award. Throughout my training in scouts I learned much about caring for those less fortunate than myself. I learned how to be a steward in my community. I learned how to ensure that a temporary habitation is left better than I found it. In this case it is my home, and if the direct detriment being brought into our community is not addressed, then how would I be leaving it better than I found it for future generations?

As a concerned husband and father of two, taxpayer, and voter, who is also working full time and going to school, I urge you to take a serious stance on these concerns and find a way that Listening House is able to continue their mission in a zoning district that will not impact other residential neighborhoods in this manner.

Sincerely,  
Nick Okonek  
649 North Street

**From:** Mandy Okonek [<mailto:mandyokonek@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Sunday, November 26, 2017 8:15 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Regarding appeal of Planning Commission decision on Listening House

My name is Miranda Okonek and I am one of the neighbors involved with the similar use zoning permit appeal. I reside at 649 North street. As a taxpaying, voting homeowner I kindly ask you to set aside the negative impression painted by Listening House and championed by the media, that the residents of Upper Swede Hollow are heartless to the needs of the less fortunate. I am also a parent, work full time and attend college at MSU. For fun I am carefully restoring my 1880's historic home, following strict regulations set per the city of Saint Paul. I ask that you uphold the restrictions set upon the operation of LH by the Planning Commission. When LH moved from a business zone to a residential zone they did not have a plan in place to adjust their programming in way to co-exist and contribute to the well-being of a residential neighborhood. This was stated by board chair Dianne McCann at a mediation meeting. The result of their lack of planning and poor management of their program has had a continued detrimental impact to the quality of life on our dead-end street neighborhood.

If you refer to your appeal paperwork, you may have noticed a quote from a neighbor submitted by Cheryl Peterson about a resident who said "I'm going to do anything I can to shut that place [Listening House] down." That comment was made by me. The story submitted to you was filled with half-truths and misinformation carefully edited to portray my experience in a negative light. After our first neighborhood meeting, the neighbors were directly instructed by Sr. Commander Axel Henry to document activities by LH guests categorized as nuisance behavior, this included loitering after hours, public urination, drug use, etc. Per this instruction, I photographed a man loitering after hours at the doors of LH who was sitting on their entrance with all of his belongings. After I took the picture this LH Guest proceeded to follow me to my home and verbally harassed me in my driveway. He told me he was watching me, he knew what car I drove and (obviously) where I live. The man departed after my husband and daughter pulled into the driveway and went back to a currently closed LH. After calling 911, the officer that came to the scene scolded me for taking photos of people and told me "I had better be careful." Feeling under served by SPPD and terrified I did say I wanted LH to close. My words of anger were not appropriate. Even after my negative experience with a LH guest I attended every single neighborhood mediation meeting with an open heart, ready to find a way to co-exist.

At our meeting with district council, Cheryl Peterson used a biased version of my encounter with her patron portraying me as insensitive. At the next mediation meeting, I sat down with Cheryl and communicated my story to her in full detail, apologized for saying hurtful words about her organization and asked that she please stop telling half truths about my experience with her guest, who she continues to believe was just waiting for a ride. As she has continued to use my story slanted against me, I feel the need to tell my truth and clear my name. Her guest's ride never came and I lived for weeks after our first encounter as he continued to harass me; while gardening, walking my dogs and walking to the library with my daughter. I have lived in fear all summer always looking over my shoulder.

Sadly, this was not my last negative experience with a LH guest. My daughter saw a LH patron who was stumbling and drinking beer before noon expose himself while urinating in a neighbor's garden. I called 911 and the officer that came to the scene was not able to do anything but take my report. I watched the man, who peed publicly, walk into LH and LH denied that he ever entered their establishment. There was no apology or redirection of behavior, only denial of accountability. My 6-year old daughter cannot un-see the man who peed in the neighbor's yard, which doubles as her school bus stop. Speaking of

children, mine are 2 of the 15 that reside on North Street alone. While walking home from school last week I stepped on a used hypodermic needle, boy am I glad I wear combat boots and that it was me who found it not one of the children on the street.

I understand that the need and mission of organizations like Listening House are important to everyone in society. I am grateful that I have a warm home to live in and enough money to feed my family. All I ask of Listening House is that they actually listen to the voices of the neighbors of Upper Swede Hollow. We are the success story. A diverse group of inner city residents who live together with mutual respect have discovered our different political, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds are a strength. We have worked together to make our neighborhood a desired location to live and raise families, fighting past the harsh stereo types associated with the east side of Saint Paul, we have created a safe, happy community in which we co-exist. We currently live with several humanitarian organizations (CLUES, People Inc., and many halfway houses). We value these agencies as positive forces in our small community. We are no strangers to the needs of our fellow humans in distress.

After several mediation sessions the staff at Listening House has refused to acknowledge continued nuisance behavior that has been caused by their guests. Perhaps this denial of truth is a tactic that was suggested by their lawyer. Whatever the motivation, Listening House has continued to publicly demonize the neighbors who, despite family/life obligations, have met tirelessly with them to encourage a better management of their program and their guest's behavior. This gives me little hope for a future of cooperation. If you read the description of the typical LH client as stated on their website, most of their guests are experiencing addiction and mental illness. Listening House champions its policy to not screen clients. This is a policy that could be amended to protect the safety of the neighborhood it operates in. LH does not allow children in their program; however, it operates in view of 15 children.

I ask that you uphold the planning commission's decision for LH to operate under conditions that mitigate the nuisance behavior caused by some of their guests. From my understanding after chatting with Nancy Homans at our mediation meetings, drop in day shelters like LH will soon become a popular solution to the city's homeless epidemic. I beg you to make a decision that can be used as an example for other communities that will soon face the same dilemma as we have this summer.

As a parent, homeowner and taxpayer I have 3 simple requests for the continued operation of LH on my formerly quiet street:

- Safety (Screen guests for criminal past, especially level 3 sex offenders, provide security)
- Accountability (Admit to problems and fix them, anticipate problems and work to prevent them)
- Transparency (Let the surrounding neighbors know when a person has been trespassed, so we can be on the watch for any negative impacts on the neighborhood, due to a temporary exile from LH)

Kind Regards,  
Miranda Okonek  
649 North Street

**From:** Mei Young [<mailto:mei@meiyoung.com>]

**Sent:** Thursday, November 23, 2017 9:08 AM

**To:** Thao, Dai (CI-StPaul) <[dai.thao@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:dai.thao@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; [Chris.Tobert@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Chris.Tobert@ci.stpaul.mn.us); Prince, Jane (CI-StPaul) <[Jane.Prince@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Jane.Prince@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Stark, Russ (CI-StPaul) <[russ.stark@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:russ.stark@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Brendmoen, Amy (CI-StPaul) <[amy.brendmoen@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:amy.brendmoen@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Bostrom, Dan (CI-StPaul) <[dan.bostrom@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:dan.bostrom@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul) <[Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward1-7 <[Ward1-7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1-7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Swede Hollow Neighborhood needs your help

Dear St. Paul City Council Members,  
Happy Thanksgiving!

This letter is on behalf of some long time friends/camping buddies of mine who own homes in the Swede Hollow Neighborhood of St. Paul. I've been visiting that quiet little neighborhood for over a decade now and can easily see why my friends have decided to live and raise their families there. Although I currently reside in greater Minnesota, I keep in touch almost daily with my Swede Hollow friends and have been sadly disappointed by reports of theft, public drug and alcohol abuse, public urination and defecation (in front of resident children), harassment, littering and trespassing which all seem to be directly related to the opening of a homeless service at First Lutheran Church called Listening House.

Instead of camping last summer, my friends had to stay home and deal with police reports about stolen bicycles that had been chained to their deck. Texts and pictures of many of the issues they've been dealing with since June have arrived almost daily from them. The summer fun of 2017 was essentially taken away from them because they felt they had to protect their homes. Their kids haven't been able to play outside without supervision.

While all of society should want to help provide for those less fortunate, we should also want to help protect tax-paying families and innocent children from witnessing and having to clean up after lewd behaviors almost daily in their neighborhood. There must be a way to accomplish both. Perhaps move the day center to a non-residential area? Or at least have them provide security during the 18 hours a day when they are not open to the less fortunate who then decide to use and disturb private properties in the surrounding neighborhood.

You have a tough job. I admire your dedication to your community and wish upon you the wisdom and empathy to make the best decision. I'm sure it would be even harder if Listening House was providing food and shelter or if they were open 24 hours a day instead of only 6 hours a day. Regardless, good luck with your vote.

Respectfully,

Mei Young  
3953 Vista Road  
Isle, MN 56342

To the City Council Members of Saint Paul,

I live just down the block from LH with my 6 yr old and 8 yr old sons and their grandma. We ride our bikes to the dead end and go on frequent walks. We love the library and are there often. To get to these places, we have to walk by or are right next to LH/FL every day. Homelessness is something that we have to deal with everywhere we go.

I have lived in this neighborhood for over 2 years. If I had known all the things we would have to go through with living by LH, I would never have bought this house and have to live in fear of what will happen next. What will we encounter when we walk down the street? Having LH in our neighborhood has affected our daily lives. We are left to call the police and hope they show up in time, and I lose sleep because I worry about what will happen next.

My sister who has two young children has been harassed as she walked to her car. I have caught a man looking through my windows into my home. I drive by LH every morning bringing my young children to school, and we are witness to high/ drunk men that can't even control their bodies waiting to get into LH. People are loitering after hours. While we were walking to the dead end of North Street to ride bikes, we had a man walking to LH scream at us angrily the whole way. When we go on our walks we find evidence of drinking and all sorts of garbage. I have overheard men as they walk by discussing where they are going to go and urinate. There is trash piled up beside LH dumpster and tents in multiple places in the neighborhood. We have encountered homelessness at the upper and lower swede hollow. Everywhere I turn there is homelessness and the affects of it.

My father is a pastor, and I was raised in the church. I am very familiar with the ins and outs of helping those in need. I know what it takes to take care of addicts, persons with mental health issues or even just lonely elderly. This issue isn't about whether what LH does is valid or a needed service. This isn't about your conscience or religion. This is about the detriment to the residential neighborhood.

I am also familiar with how churches work and the feast or famine nature, particularly with money. I feel that when it really comes down to it this is also about money. How much LH has put into moving into the basement of FL? How much it would cost them to move? How much of a loss would the church take by losing the lease with LH? Why such a long lease?

I think what LH does is something that this city needs but it is just not suitable to be placed in a residential neighborhood. I feel that what LH does is an important mission. The city needs to take action on homelessness LH and this residential neighborhood is not compatible with LH services. LH needs to relocate to an area that won't be affected like we are being affected. Please hear my cry and support the original vote.

Sincerely,

Melinda Spaid

657 North Street

From: Kristenza Nelson [mailto:kristenza.n@gmail.com]  
Sent: Sunday, November 26, 2017 6:24 PM  
To: Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul)  
Subject: Concerned parent residing next to Listening House

Dear Council Member Chris Tolbert,  
26-17

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This is not a conversation about the merits of the mission of First Lutheran/Listening House. Their work is valid. It is about place, about neighborhood compatibility and safety. This is not a conversation about discrimination. This neighborhood is home to many social service organizations that provide important services while being assets to the community. This is a conversation about the overwhelming detrimental impact LH has had in a RT1 neighborhood. This is about compatibility and the laws that govern and protect land use. This is about the safety and innocence of our children.

We seek your help to assure a safe environment in which to raise our young. We applaud the success stories of LH guests. Unfortunately, our children have been witness to the unsuccessful stories. We have experienced a wide variety of problems directly related to LH. From June to Oct there have been 76 police visits to LH. 46 were 911 calls and 29 were proactive visits from police. The calls range from disorderly conduct, public urination, intoxication, drug use, theft, and trespassing. Last year there were 10 calls to that address, a 460% increase. This is statistical evidence of the detrimental impact LH has had on residential community.

In Aug at 9am there was loud knocking on my glass door. I opened it to find an incredibly intoxicated male displaying episodic behaviors, terrifying my youngest son. "Mom what is wrong with him? Why is he here?" Zig zagging, he stumbled down the street and into LH. When I shared this at a meeting I was told to put a "No Trespassing" sign on my porch.

Our experiences with some LH guests range from annoyance to terrifying. There is no pattern. They occur while LH is open, closed, day and evening. We do not know when the next incident will happen. We only know that it will. This threat is omnipresent. It puts residents on edge when we should be enjoying our families.

The 15 children who carry out their lives on this stretch of street deserve to live in a safe environment. They have a right to be children and not witnesses to indecent and lewd behavior. I am a widowed mother doing my best to raise a family while working as a teacher at a Nature Center. It is my job to take children outside. Now, I live on a street where being outside means often being subjected to aggressive behavior, drug use and a wide variety of illegal acts. While folks wait for the LH to open its doors, children wait for buses to bring them to school.

LH staff chose not to share an alarming incident of a man who exposed his genitals to a young woman. When he publically exposed himself they did not notify their board members and refused to share his photo with the community. There is a practice of operating without accountability. How can I protect my children from predatory behaviors when there is no transparency? LH has brought a specific population to our dead end street, pairing chemically dependent, mentally challenged folks with our youngest residents. This is a toxic mix that robs children of their innocence and their right to childhood. I have been told by LH that they ban guests who they see as a threat. Some may return after a brief 30 days. When some one is banned from LH, where do you think they go? They go out into the surrounding residential streets, parks

and on occasion into our front yards and porches. Would you feel comfortable driving away to work while your 10 year child waits for the bus?

We have found our families in the direct flight path of a mentally challenged, inebriated and destitute population, whose behaviors are unpredictable and more importantly unchecked by LH staff. LH does not screen guests as Catholic Charities does nor does it ask or require its guests to refrain from substance abuse. LH has shown this neighborhood zero regards. After hours and months of meetings, LH refused to meet resident's repeated requests to adapt their policies to reflect their new residential location. They did agree to quit shutting their doors to take lunch breaks. Their doors are now open 27 hours a week. Their guests can be found orbiting the neighborhood the 141 hours that they are closed. Residents continue to request staff to assist remaining guests on their grounds before they drive away to their own homes.

There was no plan for co-existence when they opened and there continues to be "no plan" as board member Diane McCann stated in our last Oct meeting. There is no plan for safety or security. This might have worked in a B5 district, but this procedure of operation is not compatible in a RT1 zone. Without any measure of security, residents are left to pick up the pieces of failed society between dinner and after school practices. Again, the issue is not a question of whether these services are needed or valuable. They are. It is about location. The nuisance behaviors that spill over into this residential neighborhood are beyond acceptable. It is in fact a real and present danger to the families and the 15 children who call this street home.

When I drive home I am left to face this problem without a board of directors, without donors, without a congregation, without the endorsement of the Mayor's office and without a lawyer. I have my children, my home, and the zoning laws the city of Saint Paul has set in place to protect them.

We need and plea for your help to protect our children and families and urge you to uphold the zoning committees finding and help LH relocate to a commercial corridor that can support their specific type of program.

Respectfully,  
Kristenza Nelson  
653 North Street  
Saint Paul 55106

From: Michelle Leon [mailto:mleon750@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, November 25, 2017 7:59 AM

To: Thao, Dai (CI-StPaul); rebecca.neockker@ci.stpaul.mn.us; Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul); Stark, Russ (CI-StPaul); Brendmoen, Amy (CI-StPaul); Bostrom, Dan (CI-StPaul); Prince, Jane (CI-StPaul)

Cc: Kristen and Daryl Johnson

Subject: Listening House

Hello members of the City Council, My family lives in the Swede Hollow neighborhood of St. Paul on Margaret Street. As many of my neighbors have also expressed, we have serious concerns about Listening House.

It is incredibly difficult to voice opposition to a program that is so needed in our community. This has been incredibly difficult because I really gave the program a chance to work. But after hearing story after story from our neighbors on North Street, and having many of



our own negative experiences directly correlated to Listening House, I must also voice my concerns. I've lived here for 11 years, we know the patterns, have been through this before.

Can you please help us neighbors understand why we are continually being excluded from the meetings regarding Listening House that directly impact our neighborhood?

Listening House provides an important service, but if community outreach programs are near Swede Hollow Park, these programs need serious structure and supervision to work. We've been through this before. You know the stories and the issues with the park. I know you have also heard the stories of our children and families being traumatized by individuals coming and going from Listening House. If not, we can elaborate.

We have continually asked Listening House to change their policies to provide more structure so we can live comparably together, and nothing has changed. We have the right to feel safe in our homes, to feel safe in our park, to let our children play outside without being traumatized. Please let us know how you plan to address these issues.

Best,

Michelle Leon  
750 Margaret St.

From: Rachel Lerma [mailto:rjlerma@comcast.net]

Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2017 5:18 PM

To: Thao, Dai (CI-StPaul); rebecca.neockker@ci.stpaul.mn.us; Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul); Stark, Russ (CI-StPaul); Brendmoen, Amy (CI-StPaul); Bostrom, Dan (CI-StPaul); Prince, Jane (CI-StPaul)

Subject: Letter in opposition of Listening House

To the City Council Members of St. Paul,

Our appeal is not about the neighborhood being against Listening House (LH) which provides a noble and needed service. Our appeal is about the St. Paul Planning and Zoning Commission erring in allowing LH, which came from a B-5 zoning district, into a residential neighborhood zoned as RT-1.

The intent and purpose of the St. Paul Zoning code, according to Sec. 60.103, is 'to promote and to protect the public health, safety, morals, aesthetics, economic viability and general welfare of the community and to protect all areas of the city from harmful encroachment by incompatible uses.' Having LH located in a RT-1 neighborhood has resulted in activities and experiences the St. Paul zoning code was created to prevent.

My husband and I have lived across the street from First Lutheran Church (LH's Landlord and current LH location) for over 12 years. First Lutheran's Wellness Wednesday has been in operation for over 10 years, and we have always supported this church program that helps people within the community who require the service. Wellness Wednesday has never been a detriment to the neighborhood. When First Lutheran started renting their basement to LH this spring, everything changed in our residential neighborhood and not for the better. We quickly began to see how an incompatible placement could create such an overwhelming detriment to the place we call home.

Since LH has moved into our quiet and secluded residential neighborhood, we have found hypodermic needles in front of our homes and in the church parking lot where our children ride their bikes and play. We have witnessed on numerous occasions LH guests intoxicated, using drugs, demonstrated psychotic behavior, innumerable cases of public urination that has

become all too common, defecation, fights, and assaults. All of these events are occurring in front of our homes, in public spaces and, most ironically, on FL/LH grounds.

Just recently, my husband was personally threatened with violence by a LH guest when my husband asked this individual to not urinate in front of our home. Our neighbor discovered two tents set up on his property since LH moved into our neighborhood. We have people sleeping in their cars overnight on our street and people sleeping on the ground within our neighborhood. We are continually finding beer bottles, liquor bottles, drug paraphernalia, discarded clothes and trash within our neighborhood as well.

LH is a low barrier establishment which means they do not screen their guests for Level 3 sex offenders yet the Dorothy Day Center and Union Gospel both do screen for Level 3 sex offenders - so why not LH? We have 13 children who live on my street alone (remember I live right across the street from LH). Would LH be allowed to relocate next to an Elementary or Middle school? I would think not so why is LH permitted to operate in a residential neighborhood where these same school children live, play, and wait for the school bus?

The most critical concern for us and our children has been the low barrier status of LH. On September 8th of this year, a LH guest indecently exposed himself to a female belonging to Urban Roots organization by exposing his penis to her. (Urban Roots is a youth development organization and also a tenant of First Lutheran Church along with LH). Saint Paul police filed a report for Sex Offense - Lewd Conduct, Indecent Exposure as a result. Shockingly and despite months of hearing from parents of the children who live along North Street and who remain constantly concerned about the safety of their children, LH chose to NOT inform the community members of the incident or provide a description of the male who perpetrated the act. If there was someone in your neighborhood exposing himself would you not want to be informed?

Additionally, there has been a 460% increase in police calls to the addresses belonging to First Lutheran and LH when compared to last year's totals. No neighborhood should have to experience this amount of increased police calls generated from activities that were rarely experienced before LH moved in.

It is evident that LH had no plan on how to operate when they relocated from a downtown commercial location to our residential neighborhood. LH wants to operate in a RT-1 residential neighborhood without any rules and is even appealing the conditions set forth by the St. Paul Planning Commission who recognized the enormity of scale and incompatibility of their current operation by imposing said conditions. No entity can operate without rules or conditions no matter how noble the entity. LH is not exempt from the zoning laws, ordinances and conditions that are created to ensure and protect communities from the activities and experiences we have witnessed thus far. However, we have come to realize that no amount of conditions placed on LH could make them compatible in a residential neighborhood with children.

I am asking you to please uphold the original Zoning Staff Recommendation (Staff Report: July 27th, 2017) and the Zoning Board ruling (September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017) to uphold our appeal thereby reversing the original Zoning Administrator's decision to permit the proposed services of LH at First Lutheran Church.

Thank you. Kim Lerma / 613 North Street

**To: St. Paul City Council Members**

**Re: Listening House and its move into a residential neighborhood from its previous downtown location**

I am writing this letter in voice my strong opposition to Listening House being located in the First Lutheran Church in my residential neighborhood in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood of St. Paul.

I first moved into my house on Bates Avenue in March of 1979. I was greeted in my new home on the first night by someone throwing eggs at my front porch door. I soon learned that there was also a young man living in the neighborhood who was regularly burglarizing homes in the immediate area. Dayton's Bluff and the East Side were in a difficult time, with major employers like 3M and Whirlpool leaving the area and many long-time residents moving away. But I had come here because I was interested in living in a diverse neighborhood, because there were some great prices on houses that needed improvements but were solid housing stock nonetheless, and because there was a huge "green space" called Swede Hollow that abuts my backyard that is very rare in a large urban area. Then other people began moving into the condemned, abandoned, and run-down houses in the neighborhood, investing emotionally and financially in their homes and having a commitment to and a strong interest in developing a safe, livable, and vibrant community for all who lived here.

There have been numerous trials and tribulations since that time. These have included absentee landlords who seemed to have little interest in maintaining their properties, drug dealers and other criminals who looked to exploit the neighborhood and the people living here, and others who seemed to care little about what we residents were trying to do. They have also included a "wet house" that allowed residents to drink and use drugs as much as they wished outside the facility that briefly operated in the neighborhood until we as neighbors and the city convinced them to make significant changes in how they were operating their program. That program and several other social service agencies operate in our neighborhood currently and do not create the kinds of problems we have experienced with Listening House this past summer. We worked closely with the City of St. Paul and the police department (including the "Force" unit) to address these issues when they arose and we continued to forge ahead as a community. There were arrests of drug dealers, evictions of disruptive and assaultive tenants, the police were active in responding to "quality of life" issues including noise complaints like swearing and verbal and physical fights in the streets, and the city was supportive and active in addressing "problem properties" and their owners. We (and the city and the police force) have worked very hard to improve our community.

Then last spring, we as a neighborhood found out that Listening House, a drop-in center for homeless folks, which had previously been located in downtown St. Paul (with completely different zoning from our residential neighborhood) was moving into the First Lutheran Church a block and a half from my home. There was absolutely no effort by Listening House or the First Lutheran Church to involve the neighbors in what had the potential to be a very disruptive influence on the much-improved quality of life in our neighborhood. First Lutheran Church appeared to try to circumvent the usual zoning process for renting space to a program such as Listening House in our residential neighborhood by claiming a "same or similar use" to a church in another area of St. Paul that was offering yoga and writing and dance classes for community members.

During the past summer, we have experienced numerous and significant problems related to Listening House being here. Some examples of problematic behaviors include public intoxication and urination, LH clients sitting and sleeping on residents' porches and in neighbors' backyards, loud verbal and sometimes even physical altercations on the church grounds and on neighborhood streets, all of which creates fear and intimidation for the children and adults who live here and a major loss of safety and livability in our community). And, even more concerning, with Listening House's very limited hours during the week, homeless folks have nowhere to go once Listening House closes their doors and their clients are left to wander the streets of our residential neighborhood, with no monitoring or encouragement to move on from the immediate neighborhood. Listening House has done little to address neighbors' security concerns and doesn't seem to see this as part of their responsibility in a residential neighborhood. They seem to feel that it is our responsibility as neighbors to monitor and address security concerns once all their staff have gone home.

I also happen to be a psychologist (licensed in 1985) in private practice in St. Paul and I have been involved with the mental health field since 1970. I have worked extensively with anger management, domestic abuse, and general mental health issues since 1985 and I have a website, [www.ANGEResources.com](http://www.ANGEResources.com), that is a part of that practice. But my work history also has included developing and serving as Director of a Rule 36 facility for the chronically mentally ill for two years in the early 1980's. This program was operated by an organization called Community Involvement Programs in Minneapolis. Many of the folks in my program had other issues as well, including alcohol and drug abuse, criminal histories, and homelessness and we provided counseling, education, skills training, and worked with other providers in the community to help our clients tap into resources available to them. Our work with these folks provided structure and accountability and we offered pragmatic and concrete tools and resources to help them actually improve their lives.

One of my major concerns about Listening House has to do with their lack of structure and accountability. From my understanding, they do little or no "screening" and have little or no awareness of whether their clients are pedophiles, have criminal histories involving property crimes and violence, or have significant mental health or chemical health issues that need to be addressed. My understanding is that they offer few, if any, resources to their clients about how to specifically address these absolutely critical issues that dramatically impact their lives and their current situations. There also seem to be few and poorly-defined consequences for clients who create problems in their program or in the immediate neighborhood. This lack of structure and

accountability is troublesome in any mental health or chemical health population, but especially in a situation where there has been a major impact on a residential neighborhood, as we have clearly experienced over the past summer.

There is an aching need for homelessness issues to be addressed in St. Paul and elsewhere and it is my hope that the new mayor and the city council will take this issue seriously and address it in a comprehensive and effective way (there are models for these kinds of comprehensive plans in other parts of the country). I talked by phone with several mayoral candidates during the recent election and offered to volunteer my time to help develop such a plan for St. Paul. But putting "low-barrier" homeless facilities in any residential neighborhood in the city of St. Paul is not part of any meaningful long-term solution. I strongly encourage you, as our city council, to deny Listening House's request to continue to operate in a location that is certainly not good for my neighborhood but, ultimately, is also not helpful for the homeless folks who so desperately need and deserve some specific kinds of assistance to improve their lives in real and meaningful ways.

David Decker  
619 Bates Avenue

**From:** john erler [<mailto:jerler48@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 29, 2017 10:41 AM

**To:** Thao, Dai (CI-StPaul); Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul); Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul); Stark, Russ (CI-StPaul); Brendmoen, Amy (CI-StPaul); Bostrom, Dan (CI-StPaul); Prince, Jane (CI-StPaul)

**Subject:** Listening House

November 29, 2017

Dear Council member,

In 2016 the Saint Paul Police were called to 463/464 Maria (First Lutheran) **10** times. In 2017, the year Listening House moved in, the Police were called to the same address **46** times. In 2017 there were an additional 29 Proactive Police Visits that were not initiated by calls to the SPPD. The dispute over Listening House moving to the residential Upper Swede Hollow neighborhood centers on the presence of a small number of disruptive persons among their guests. These people can be obnoxious, threatening and belligerent. Our neighborhood has had to deal with people of this sort for the entire 34 years that we have lived here. The level of the problem varies over time but as there seems to be no way to end poverty and homelessness we assume that we just have to live with some of this. The problem has become noticeably worse since Listening House moved here last summer. In addition to the people who need and deserve the help they get, Listening House has also attracted more of these disruptive persons. As everyone living in a community should be expected to treat all others with a basic level of civility, their behavior is unacceptable.

It is particularly irritating that the people responsible for the Listening House program felt entitled to move their program to our neighborhood without having the consideration to contact the neighbors. They know the nature of their program and the people they serve, including the disruptive people. The problems some of their guests have caused in our neighborhood can be no surprise to them. I wonder how many of the staff and board of Listening House would allow their program to be sited in their own neighborhoods. How many of them would allow their children to be exposed to same appalling behavior that they have exposed the children of our neighborhood to? Their casual dismissal of the detrimental effect of these behaviors on neighborhood livability would end, I believe, if Listening House were located on their block. There are not enough programs to help homeless people. More are needed. But the planning of programs needs to acknowledge the disruptive effect of the anti-social and threatening behavior of some people. The Listening House program in our neighborhood has us feeling like we are being made to carry a disproportionate share of a problem that is everyone's responsibility. A

solution that felt fair would be better. Listening House needs to be relocated to a non residential area.

John Erler

631 Bates Ave.

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CITY COUNCIL  
WARD 7

To the City Council

I have lived in my home at 706 E. 8th St., St. Paul, MN since 1956. My next door neighbors on the west side of me are sponsored by People Inc. They have been there for many years. I have not experienced any problems or troubles with them. The stories I have heard regarding the people using the Listening House services are frightening. I believe it would be for the best to relocate Listening House to another more appropriate neighborhood since we already have one home for homeless people at 700 E. 8th St. This home is less than a block away from Listening House's present location at the First Lutheran Church at 464 Maria Ave., St Paul, MN.

Alvonne Kuliskeck

706 E. 8th St.  
St. Paul, MN 55106