

11/5/24

St. Paul City Council,

I am writing in reference to Appeal File #24-087437, and Variance File #24-077286, and in response to the Public Hearing Notice property owners in the Lowertown area recently received. This input is in response to an appeal made by the property owners at 287 6th Street East, appealing a decision made by the City's Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

My wife and I are property owners in the Market House Condominiums located at 289 5th Street East. We have been owners here for seven years and have no plans to relocate. We live in the building directly to the south of the appellant's building.

I am also the president of the Market House Condominium Association. Our Association's board supports the 59 owners and the approximately 110 individuals who live here in this historic Lowertown building constructed in 1902.

Speaking for the Market House Condominium Association's Board of Directors and owners, we are in strong opposition to this appeal made by the appellant. We urge the City Council to deny this appeal and affirm the BZA's decision to deny a zoning variance. We offer the following reasons and observations for the Council members to consider:

- Zoning is in place to maintain a balance between residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural. It is meant to prevent overlapping incompatible uses, like having a home next to a factory, or in this case, condo homes next to a storage facility. The zoning code for St. Paul's District B5 permits no more than 15% of one's gross floor area to be zoned for rental storage. This limit is for a reason - community balance. While approving such a variance request might be helpful for the property owner, it creates an imbalance in the favor of industrial use. Converting an adjacent building to an industrial/rental storage use may also cause residential property values in the area to stagnate or even decrease.
- The City of St. Paul has been very intentional and expressive in their desire to draw more residents to the Lowertown/Downtown areas. Approving such an appeal is in direct conflict to the City's ambitions of attracting 20,000 more residents and 20,000 more living units to Downtown St. Paul.
- Council member Noecker is holding Downtown Residents' Meetings throughout November to share the City's vision for Downtown. We have not seen or heard of any

City ambitions stated with a focus on increasing the number of storage facilities in the Downtown area.

- Closer to home, Market House has 59 condominiums. Six (6) of these units are currently for sale with little to no interest from buyers. Having an increased industrial feel to the neighborhood, and a similar view from some of these units, will not entice potential buyers.
- We wonder if the appellant is aware of the City's plan to support the conversion of privately owned "office" spaces to residential spaces. Our Association encourages the appellant to further explore such a conversion of space to more residential units. Lead the way and contribute to the City's goal for more Downtown residential units!
- The mission of the heralded St. Paul Downtown Alliance is to create and maintain a vibrant, economically successful, safe and attractive Downtown. It is set to expand into this very neighborhood in January, 2025. Approving this appeal would also be in conflict with the Alliance's mission and their efforts.
- This building stands on the corners of both 6th Street at Broadway Street, and on 6th Street at Wall Street. Both corners are already hazardous to both drivers and pedestrians. There are both freeway On and Off ramps directly at the 6th Street and Broadway corner. One way traffic north on Broadway Street is already hazardous, as traffic prematurely accelerates when approaching the I-94 East On ramp. Traffic through this intersection has also greatly increased since the Kellogg Street bridge detour has begun. Traffic exiting I-94 westbound onto 6th Street literally exits directly along side this building, often at too high a rate of speed. Accidents occur here regularly. Creating a storage facility here will increase car, truck, and pedestrian traffic trying to enter and exit a storage facility onto an already overly crowded few streets.
- Street parking in this immediate area is extremely limited and competitive. Events at CHS Stadium, Farmer's Market, Mears Park, and Bullvino's and other restaurants already escalate traffic and parking problems. The building also appears to have very limited parking on their property.
- We believe the building in question is also under the authority of St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission. We are hopeful this Commission has already provided input into the protection of this historic property.
- Lastly, the Market House Board is uncertain of the history, but we believe the appellant already has a city variance to maintain a large, unsightly billboard on the building's roof

top - the only billboard across St. Paul's east facing landscape. We assume such advertising has a positive cash flow for the owners, but at the expense of St. Paul's desire for an attractive skyline. Achieving another variance for financial gain seems self-serving for the appellant and not in keeping with being civic minded and in being good neighbors.

We applaud the City's Board of Zoning Appeals for making the right decision in denying the original request for such a variance. The Market House Condo Association urges the City Council to affirm the BZA's decision, and deny this appeal request.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael McAvoy, President
Market House Condo Association