



November 5, 2024

Members of the St. Paul City Council:

We are deeply concerned about the proposed ban on new drive-thrus being considered. Such a broad policy could have consequences for the City's future growth, accessibility, and overall business climate.

**First and foremost, a ban on new drive-thrus could discourage businesses from investing in St. Paul.** Companies looking to expand or open new locations may see this restriction as a reason to choose neighboring cities that offer more flexibility. **This could result in missed economic opportunities and fewer job prospects for St. Paul residents.** While it may make sense to restrict drive-thrus in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic or challenging traffic patterns, not all parts of the City face the same concerns.

**Drive-thrus also play a critical role in providing essential services for residents with mobility restrictions.** According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, nearly one in two Minnesotans over age 75 and one in ten age 35-64 report one or more disabilities. For many of these consumers, especially those with ambulatory issues, drive-thrus are more than just convenient, they're necessary. The ability to access services like pharmacies, banks, and restaurants without needing to navigate stairs or long distances is vital for many members of our community.

**Additionally, busy families in St. Paul depend on the convenience drive-thrus offer.** Whether it's grabbing a meal on the way to an event or picking up a prescription after work, drive-thrus provide a much-needed service for time-strapped parents. Restricting future drive-thrus could make the City less family-friendly, forcing families to look elsewhere for the convenience they need in their daily lives.

One critical point that seems to have been overlooked in this discussion is the potential future needs of local businesses. **St. Paul is home to more than a half dozen independent pharmacies, none of which currently have drive-thrus.** However, as the City's population continues to age, these pharmacies may seek to innovate and expand their services to **better serve their customers.** Drive-thrus could become an important part of how pharmacies meet the evolving healthcare needs of St. Paul residents. **By limiting new drive-thrus now, the City could be impacting the ability of these businesses to adapt and serve**

**their customers in the future, compounding the pharmacy desert challenges recently reported in the news.**

Furthermore, disallowing future changes that would expand the size or scope of an existing drive-thru could prevent necessary safety improvements. Existing drive-thrus could be made safer and more efficient with thoughtful modifications, but the limitations proposed could close off that possibility.

Instead of imposing a blanket ban, the City should take a more balanced approach—one that recognizes the importance of safety while also considering the needs of businesses, residents, and future growth. St. Paul's existing processes for approving drive-thrus could be improved by considering traffic, pedestrian safety, and neighborhood input on a case-by-case basis. This would allow the City to address safety concerns while still supporting accessibility and economic development.

We urge the City Council to reconsider the proposed ban and instead focus on creating a more responsive, flexible regulatory framework that balances both safety and convenience for all.

Sincerely,



Bruce Nustad  
President  
Minnesota Retailers



Angie Whitcomb, IOM  
President & CEO  
Hospitality Minnesota