

May 25, 2021

Bill Dermody, bill.dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Dear Mr. Dermody:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed zoning change to allow the Freedom House to become a permanent facility for the following reasons. First, the condition that these facilities be less than a half mile from an overnight shelter makes no sense especially in the case of the Freedom House. It is well known that the Dorothy Day Center does not admit persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol. From my personal experience many of the people coming into Irvine Park from the Freedom House would not be allowed on the Dorothy Day campus. If the Dorothy Day Center will not accept many of the people using the Freedom House, why the half mile distance requirement? The guests of the Freedom House are not there because the Dorothy Day is close by. Second why are you trying to congregate shelters in one area of the city? Even the statement by the Freedom House disagrees with that strategy. I quote, "Entertainment, business and social services all on the same streets creates density that can be a lot to bear. If there were more Freedom Houses regionally located, there would be less density in city centers – a good goal for Minnesota to work towards." Concentrating the number of homeless people in one area, makes the entire neighborhood fearful. Not a good way to promote a welcoming environment. I have attached a simple Google search of the "shelters" near Irvine Park. As you can see the concentration is very lopsided. Finally, irrespective of the SPPD data attached to Homeless Services Zoning Study, the number of 911 calls, police patrols, and crime has increased dramatically in the Irvine Park neighborhood since the Freedom House has opened.

Sincerely,

Dirk Dantuma

59 Irvine Park

St. Paul MN 55102

Google

overnight shelters

Rating ▾Hours ▾Your past visits ▾

Sort by **Best match** ▾

Simpson Housing Services

4.1 (95) · Homeless s...

8.6 mi · Minneapolis, MN

Closed · Opens 5PM · (612) 874-...

As far as shelters go not bad."

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Union Gospel Mission

4.1 (16) · Homeless s...

0.7 mi · 77 9th St E

Open 24 hours · (651) 228-1800

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Naomi's Family Center

3.6 (27) · Homeless s...

0.7 mi · 77 9th St E

Open now · (651) 222-7962

"It is a great shelter to come to if you need help."

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Project Home Day Center

No reviews · Homeless shelter

1.0 mi · 244 10th St E

Their website mentions **overnight shelter**

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Catholic Charities

Higher Ground Saint Paul

3.4 (129) · Social ser...

0.4 mi · 435 Dorothy Day Pl

Open now · (651) 647-2350

Their website mentions **overnight shelter**

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Catholic Charities

4.1 (15) · Social servi...

0.5 mi · 438 Dorothy Day Pl Ofc · ...

Open 24 hours · (651) 227-2637

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Kingdom Pathways

2.1 (11) · Homeless s...

2.4 mi · 1088 University Ave W

(651) 387-8393

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Hope Street Shelter

3.8 (37) · Social servi...

7.8 mi · Minneapolis, MN

Open 24 hours · (612) 204-8211

Their website mentions **shelter overnight**

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

Bethel Hotel-Working Men's Htl

4.2 (9) · Non-profit organization

1.5 mi · 435 University Ave E

Open now · (651) 292-1721

DIRECTIONS

Union Gospel Mission

https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS852US852&tbs=lf:1,lf_ui:2&tbm=lcl&sxsrf=ALeKk01j7ClaBxrvxQckN7V2W7-nD0y1kw:16218844... 1/1

West 7th Street Neighborhood & Re-zoning

The residents and businesses in the West 7th Street Neighborhood understand there is a great need for homeless facilities. However, since the Listening/Freedom House opened in late January 2021, there have been daily incidents ranging from trash spread over multiple city blocks, parking lots, and residential homes (including human feces, crack pipes, syringes and condoms), fights, thefts, and break-ins at commercial and residential buildings along West 7th. Some incidents are violent in nature. The crime/vandalism has become especially unwelcome from Kellogg to St. Clair Avenue and in Irvine Park. The West 7th Neighborhood wants to be a partner in finding a better solution for the Listening/Freedom House.

The West 7th Neighborhood members feel there has to be a larger facility for the Listening/Freedom House to prevail. The former fire station at 296 West 7th does not have enough amenities, such as showers, beds, and bathrooms to accommodate the number of individuals using this Listening/Freedom House location. The current location makes it difficult for individuals using the Listening/Freedom House to have easy access to medical or mental health treatment.

The West 7th area is a thriving entertainment/retail/residential area. Many of the individuals who use Listening/Freedom House have mental health issues and several have become very aggressive towards restaurant customers, area employees, and residents. While the Saint Paul Police have increased their presence in the area, they can't be all places at all times. The incidents are becoming more frequent and more aggressive.

The commercial and residential neighbors that work and live in this area are not trained or equipped to deal with this new crime/vandalism. As a result, the restaurants and businesses are losing customers and we're all afraid of what will happen next and no one feels safe.



Since the Listening House opened in late January, West 7th residential and commercial neighbors are now experiencing a 3-fold jump in new crimes and vandalism. There have been several violent crimes involving weapons as well as many thefts/break-ins and vandalism.

Re-zoning the West 7th area for homeless shelters IS NOT the solution for the challenges of the homeless.

The Listening/Freedom House needs to be relocated to a larger building that has an appropriate number of bathrooms, showers, beds, and space, with convenient access to 24 hour full-service facilities such as Catholic Charities. At the current location, when the Listening/Freedom House closes at 8pm, there is nowhere for the Listening/Freedom House individuals to easily find shelter. As a result, the homeless are camping in commercial parking lots, breaking into apartment building foyers, and sleeping on the lawns, decks and porches of the homes in and around Irvine Park.

The West 7th Neighborhood wants to help the City of Saint Paul relocate the Listening/Freedom House so they can be more successful in their mission of providing for the homeless. We want to help improve the quality of life for these homeless individuals. A larger building with more basic amenities could provide a wider range of opportunities including increasing services, such as more complete meals. Several of the West 7th Businesses are willing to donate meals, food and financial support to that effort. Plus, the extra space of a larger building would furnish better protection against the weather.

Included in this document you will find photos illustrating a small sampling of the incidents occurring daily. We sincerely hope that the Planning Commissioners understand that West 7th, as the gateway to Saint Paul, cannot withstand these daily incidents and threats. Re-zoning 296 West 7th to a homeless structure is a mistake.

We ask that the proposed zoning change NOT be approved and a more suitable location be found for the Listening/Freedom House.

Thank you for your full consideration.

Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub
The Art Farm Advertising
Parlour Bar
Cossetta Alimentari

Dan Parker, WWII Company
Eagle Street Grill
Mike Black Law Office
Westlake Orthotics and Prosthetics

Dr. Robert Keifer
Dan Conoryea
Susan Adair, Irvine Park Resident
Ginny Zeyer, Irvine Park Resident

Cathy Czah, Irvine Park Resident
307 Walnut Street Owners/Residents

Photos of West 7th Incidents Since February 2021

Photos included represent a small sampling of the events occurring daily in the West 7th Neighborhood

PLEASE NOTE -- some of the photos are very graphic and maybe disturbing to some readers



Garbage after a few days at the Listening/Freedom House, 296 West 7th Street



Listening/Freedom House individuals preventing entry to West 7th Parking Lot (former Dairy Queen)



Probable crack pipe found near Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub on 3/23/21

Syringe, one of 11 found on 5/9/21 in the parking lot at 310 Sherman Street and in the Alexander Ramsey House parking lot



Weapon of cut-off rake handle with rocks tied into T-shirt fabric. Found in parking lot at 310 Sherman Street



Two separate fires, 4/26/21 and 5/13/21 were set near the dry cleaners building at 286 West 7th by Listening/Freedom House individuals. The fires were caught early and extinguished 4/26 by Police and 5/13 by a Ramsey County Sheriff who saw flames as he was driving by



Saint Paul Police investigate shooting at Listening/Freedom House on 3/11/21 (above and right photos)

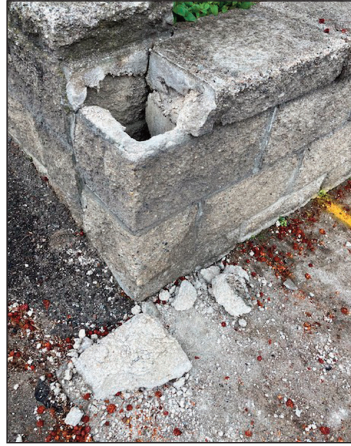


Photos of West 7th Incidents Since February 2021 CONTINUED

Photos included represent a small sampling of the events occurring daily in the West 7th Neighborhood

PLEASE NOTE -- some of the photos are very graphic and maybe disturbing to some readers

Property damage to retaining wall at 310 Sherman Street done by Listening/ Freedom House individuals on 4/22/21



Property damage to window at 286 West 7th Street done by Listening/Freedom House individuals on 4/6/21

Individual from Listening/Freedom House removing trash from Ramsey House dumpsters on 5/8/21



Food, containers, trash next to Ramsey House wall on Walnut Street side



Trash along West 7th Street, May 2021



Rabbit with skull crushed and mutilated found at rear door to 310 Sherman Street on 4/22/21 (gray box is to cover very graphic mutilation). Saint Paul Police felt the rabbit was likely tortured and killed by a human and not a dog, cat or coyote



Human feces found on edge of 310 Sherman Street parking lot. Found almost daily in Ramsey House parking lot, former DQ parking lot, along Walnut Street, and many other areas in the West 7th Neighborhood

Individual from Listening/ Freedom House in former DQ parking lot, May 2021



Confrontation between Listening/Freedom House individual and employee at Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub on 4/16/21

Letter from a West 7th Resident

The email below was written by one of the tenants at the Louis Rochat building, located at 267 1/2 – 275 West 7th Street. The email was sent to the property manager at Kingwood Management company.

Regarding the new neighbors – although I have to admit things are not as bad as they were even a couple weeks ago, I still feel like this is not a good location for the Day Shelter.

As a resident living across the street and who has to walk to my car (on street parking only, with metered parking only ending at Grand & W 7th) I now avoid that side of the street until I am beyond it.

On the weekends I leave quite early and the folks who are waiting until it opens at 8am often are literally camped out along the side of the building with pallets and tarp for walls or in the bus shelter, which is right in front of the building. Thankfully the security for my building has been beefed up in response to those waiting for 8 sleeping (as well as urinating, defecating, leaving used condoms, cigarette butts ((on carpeting!)) clothing and trash in our doorway).

When I come home in the afternoon they are, understandably, congregating out in front, in large numbers, making it intimidating to walk through, and if I did need to catch a bus going towards Downtown I would never wait for it there. As a matter of fact at first glance you might think there are a dozen or so men waiting for the bus because they are right where the bus stops. It's also not unusual for there to be an argument ensuing as well.

There is often a police presence, which although reassuring really is not a great optic for the neighborhood. This area has made a reputation for being a restaurant destination especially for those attending events at the Xcel. This had finally made its way west of Walnut with Parlour opening and with that kind of expansion comes the effort to be visually welcoming. And then boom- it is NOT visually welcoming; I feel bad for Parlour and the positive investment they have made to this block. I really feel sorry the bridal gown shop welcoming their "by appointment only" brides, bridesmaids and mother's of the bride...

So, beyond the intimidation factor leading to walking a different route, the economic and aesthetic trials being taken on by neighborhood business who we are all looking to re-establish a post pandemic normalcy – I am last but not least, particularly concerned about and question the wisdom of locating this Day Shelter right across the street from a large, very family-oriented apartment complex. There are tons of children, there's playground equipment in the courtyard - which is not fenced in. It's well kept and seems to be a very safe community- You would think this may have occurred to someone, I'm surprised it's not a zoning issue. I was walking to my car one day, I had changed my usual route and when I came back around the guy I was avoiding came out of the alley and casually walked up to a nice SUV parked outside the Apt complex, gave the door a pull, it was locked and he went on his way... middle of the day.

None of it seems very neighborly.

Thanks for your consideration,
Susan, a West 7th St concerned resident

"I now avoid that side of the street until I am beyond it.

On the weekends I leave quite early and the folks who are waiting until it opens at 8am often are literally camped out along the side of the building with pallets and tarp for walls or in the bus shelter, which is right in front of the building. Thankfully the security for my building has been beefed up in response to those waiting for 8 sleeping (as well as urinating, defecating, leaving used condoms, cigarette butts ((on carpeting!)) clothing and trash in our doorway)."

Sent: Thursday, May 13, 2021 11:14 AM

To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us<<mailto:Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>>>; CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us<<mailto:CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us>>>

Subject: Urgent Support for Freedom House

My name is Kyle Lipinski and I work for Minnesota Community Care, the largest community health center in Saint Paul. I am dual licensed counselor who works with unsheltered individuals experiencing significant mental health concerns.

I support Freedom House remaining a day shelter. Space where people experiencing homelessness can spend their days has become almost non-existent since the pandemic and are becoming less and less available due to a lack of free public space where individuals can truly be themselves. Freedom House is a safe, welcoming, supportive space for unsheltered adults to spend daytime hours and access services like mental health and medical support as well as rest, store their belongings, and get food and supplies.

Our Minnesota Community Care medical outreach provides care at Freedom House, where they connect with some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Removing Freedom House will not "solve" the problem of homelessness or criminal activity in the West 7th Community; it will simply make it harder for unsheltered, mentally ill, and substance using people to access services.

Freedom House is a hub for service providers to meet with individuals who have some of the greatest needs in the unsheltered population in Saint Paul. Please allow Freedom House to continue its vital work.

Respectfully,

Kyle Lipinski
424 Dorothy Day Place

Sent: Saturday, May 22, 2021 3:45 PM

To: Pereira, Luis (CI-StPaul) <Luis.Pereira@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Cc: Butler, Sonja (CI-StPaul) <sonja.butler@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Rezoning and West 7th Homeless Shelter

Mr. Pereira;

Could you please make sure my email is distributed to the planning commissioners and put into the record as part of the discussing on rezoning for homeless shelters?

To the Planning Commissioners of St. Paul;

I work in a clinic in the Richie Medical building. I've worked in that same clinic for 17 years. I usually park either in the contract lot or on Sherman.

A homeless shelter opened in the old fire station building earlier this year. Since then, it's become very unnerving to walk by the area near the fire station because of the homeless. Many of them appear to have mental health problems and are very confrontational.

Last Friday, when I was walking to my car around 4:45pm, one of the homeless men from in front of the fire station walked over to me very quickly and grabbed the strap on my purse. He tried to yank it off my shoulder. I started screaming and kicked him very hard on his shins. He left go and I ran to my car. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. I've been using the same route to my job for 17 years and I've never been this scared to go back to work on Monday. I don't know what to do.

For the safety of the residents and employees and the homeless in that area, please do not make that fire station a permanent homeless rescue by rezoning.

It's clear that building is not big enough as so many are laying on the sidewalk in front, in the bus shelter, on the grass along side the fire station, and down by the old Dairy Queen. Regions Hospital has on site mental health care and they're good at what they do. Isn't there a larger building near Regions that would be better because of access to Regions?

I know homelessness is a complicated topic. Shoving them into a building without medical help puts everyone at risk.

Don't rezone the fire station area.

Karen Lewis

1709 Sunbird Dr., Faribault, MN 55021

Sent: Thursday, May 13, 2021 10:45 AM

To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Cc: CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: In support of Freedom House

5/13/2021

My name is Kat Donnelly and I work for Minnesota Community Care, the largest community health center in Saint Paul.

I support Freedom House remaining a day shelter. Space where people experiencing homelessness can spend their days has become almost non-existent since the pandemic. Freedom House is a safe, welcoming, supportive space for unsheltered adults to spend daytime hours and access services like mental health and medical support as well as rest, shower, store their belongings, and get food and supplies.

I provide care at Freedom House via our medical outreach to our unsheltered patients, where I connect with some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Removing Freedom House will not "solve" the problem of homelessness or criminal activity in the West 7th Community; it will simply make it harder for unsheltered, mentally ill, and substance using people to access care and services.

Freedom House is a hub for service providers to meet with individuals who have some of the greatest needs in the unsheltered population in Saint Paul. Please allow Freedom House to continue its vital work.

Respectfully,

Kat Donnelly

Kat Donnelly, FNP

Health Care for the Homeless

MN Community Care

kdonnelly@mncare.org

424 Dorothy Day Place

Sent: Monday, May 24, 2021 8:36 PM

To: Dermody, Bill (CI-StPaul) <bill.dermody@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Cc: Noecker, Rebecca (CI-StPaul) <Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Listening House zoning issue 296 West 7th St.

Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.

Hello Mr. Dermody -

Would you please forward this note to appropriate Planning Commission Members regarding the rezoning discussion for 296 West 7th St., St. Paul, the Listening House.

Thank you for your concern about homeless and mentally ill members of our community. Rezoning 296 West 7th St. is not the best solution for helping these individuals or for the safety of the families living within feet of this former fire station. Unfortunately, the homeless individuals are not receiving the mental and physical care they need at the Listening House and are roaming the neighborhood trespassing, causing damage to personal property, and engaging in other unlawful activities. The broken and boarded up windows at the firestation and in the community (Forepaugh's) do not project a safe, thriving neighborhood, either. One of my neighbors shared that she's had to call the police more times this year, than in the past thirty years. Just this weekend a violent, mentally ill person had an outburst at a building site in the neighborhood and burned a piece of property of the builder.

Please consider moving the Listening House out of a high density residential neighborhood (Irvine Park Towers is across the street, as well as other apartment buildings, too). Restaurants are struggling to recover after the pandemic shutdowns, as well, and criminal activity deters patrons. Perhaps consider partnering with Dorothy Day and Catholic Charities or choose a site near their campus where there are 24-hour medical and mental health facilities designed and equipped to help those in need.

Thank you for your consideration

Robin Gehl
38 Irvine Park
St. Paul, MN 55102

Sent: Friday, May 14, 2021 7:49 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Freedom house

May 14,2021

My name is Maria Teresa Olivari, MD and I volunteer as a cardiologist for Minnesota Community Care, the largest community health center in Saint Paul.

I support Freedom House remaining a day shelter. Spaces where people experiencing homelessness can spend their days have become almost non-existent since the pandemic. Freedom House is a safe, welcoming, supportive space for unsheltered adults to spend daytime hours and access services like mental health and medical care as well as rest, store their belongings, get food and supplies.

Our Minnesota Community Care medical outreach provides care at Freedom House, where they connect with some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Removing Freedom House will not "solve" the problem of homelessness or criminal activity in the West 7th Community but it will make it harder for unsheltered, mentally ill, and substance using people to access much needed services.

Freedom House is a hub for service providers to meet with individuals who have some of the greatest needs in the unsheltered population in Saint Paul.

Please allow Freedom House to continue its vital work.

Respectfully,

Maria Teresa Olivari, MD

Voice Mail transcriptions via City Council offices:

Hello my name is Gerardo Segovia. First name is spelled Gerardo last name, SEGOVIA. My address is 1667 Englewood Ave, Saint Paul 5512. This is in regards of Freedom House issue that is going on. I work for a Minnesota Community care in Saint Paul, specifically health care for the homeless. I am in support of Freedom House remaining a day shelter. This is a space where people experiencing homeless can spend their days. Because I mean they are almost non-existent because of the pandemic. Really Freedom House is safe is its supportive for the adult on shelter folks. They do provide access to mental health, medical help support for any other social services they provide. Supplies, get food, all that stuff. And as I said in are Minnesota Community Care medical outreach providers that work at the Freedom House. Come, I have truly shown us how vulnerable this population is in our state in removing Freedom House will not solve the problem of homelessness or criminal activity in the W 7th neighborhood. It would actually make it harder for every single on shelter material, substance. Use person have a harder time accessing services. I like I said, please consider my repetition. Our petition to have Freedom House remain open. It's very important for our own shelter folks and for this population to remain getting services that are there that much, much needed. Again, my name is Gerardo Segovia, phone number 651-470-3086.

Hi, my name is Elizabeth Fursland. That's E L I Z A B E T H last name is sersland S E R S L A N D my address is. My work address is four two four Dorothy Day. Place Saint Paul, Minnesota five five one zero two. My home address is ninety three seven Second Avenue South Bloomington, Minnesota. Five five four two zero. I am calling about the Freedom House and my support for the Freedom House to remain at the shelter. I currently work for Minnesota Community Care, the largest community Health Center in Minnesota. Freedom House is a space where people experiencing homelessness can spend their days has become in. These spaces have become nonexistent, more non-existent since the pandemic. Freedom House is a safe, welcoming support of space for unsheltered adults to spend their daytime hours and access services like mental health and medical support, as well as rest store store their belongings and to get food and supplies. Our clinic provides outreach, support, care at Freedom House are providers come and give medical care to the people who come to the drop in center. Some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Removing the Freedom House will not solve any problems for homelessness that criminal activity or other issues in the W 7th community, it will simply make it harder for unsheltered mentally ill and substance using

people to access services. Freedom House is a hub Where is for service providers to meet with individuals who have some of the greatest needs in the unsheltered population in Saint Paul, please allow Freedom House to continue its vital work. Please keep it going. It is one of the best resources for the homeless community that is in this city. Again, my name is Elizabeth Thursday and I'm a social worker with the Minnesota Community Care Health care for the homeless. Thank you.

Hello, good afternoon. My name is Ruby Martinez. My name is spelled Ruby for Ruby at Martinez Martinez today is May 13th, Thursday, May 13th around 1:24. I worked for Minnesota Community Care, the largest community Health Center in Saint Paul. My address is 424 Dorothy Day place. I support Freedom House remaining a day shelter. I'm leaving this message to advocate that Freedom House should stay open. The space where people experiencing homelessness can spend their days has become almost non existence since the pandemic. Freedom House is a safe, welcoming, supportive space for unsheltered adults to spend daytime hours and access services like mental health and medical support as well as the rest as well as rest store their belongings and get food and supplies are Minnesota Community Care medical outreach providers care at Freedom House where they connect with some of the most vulnerable people in our state. Removing Freedom House will not solve the problem of homelessness or criminal activity on the West Seven community. It will simply make it harder for unsheltered mentally ill and substance using people to access services. Freedom House is a hub for service providers to meet with individuals who have some of the greatest needs in the unsheltered population and seeing Paul please allow Freedom House to continue its vital work. Respectfully, Ruby Martinez, clinic coordinator at health care for the homeless. Four two four thirty Day place phone number. Here is six five one seven nine three two two one nine. Thank you and I hope Freedom House continues to operate as an emergency zoning for the pandemic an for a Center for unsheltered folks to go Thank you so much. Bye bye.