

(From University UNITED)

October 9, 2007

St. Paul City Council
St. Paul City Hall
St. Paul, MN 55102

Re: Walgreens/ Big Top Site Plan Appeal

Dear Council President Lantry and Members of the St. Paul City Council:

Thank you for allowing additional time to discuss the proposed Walgreens/ Big Top project at Midway Center. A meeting was held this morning with about fifteen people including members of the community, city staff, and the development team. I believe all parties found the discussion to be informative and hopefully even valuable.

University UNITED and our community partners oppose the approved plan because it is disconnected from the future street grids and pedestrian friendly vision of the Central Corridor Development Strategy. We request that the developer voluntarily suspend efforts seeking final approval of the site plan until after the station area planning is done. This planning process will start October 24 and will conclude by the end of the year. The property owner would have a major role at these station area meetings. It is possible that at the end of this process the current approved site plan will be accepted at the station area process, but it is also possible that another better plan will emerge. Our request for a delay in approval will not present any undue hardship to the owner because the two businesses are already located in the shopping center.

However, if the developer is not willing to voluntarily suspend the approval process until after the station area planning process concludes, we then request that the City Council support our appeal and reject the site plan. The Council has more than sufficient grounds to reject this plan at this time because it is not in keeping with the comprehensive plan, the Central Corridor Development Strategy or city transit policies. Additionally, the city needs to support the upcoming station area planning process and the Metropolitan Council station planning process, which are about to start. Rejection of this proposed site plan is not inconsistent with the earlier action of the Council waiving this project from the requirements of the new transit-overlay district. The location of the buildings is of such critical importance that it can impact the viability of future transit connections and development at this critical intersection and clearly needs to be examined independently.

Much is at stake with this site plan. Substantively and symbolically, we are deciding whether we are serious about building to the future vision of light rail. We believe that continued design work on this site plan can yield an improved project that meets the needs of all parties. We attach three additional ideas for your consideration – not because

any are the perfect solution, but because we believe it shows the range of ideas that should be explored.

Finally, these recent discussions raise serious concerns in the community about the lack of community process. How did this project for this critical intersection progress so far without a presentation and serious dialogue with the neighboring district council(s)? And with the start of the station area planning process just weeks away, why would we want to undercut the work of the community stakeholders who will be looking at these very issues? The best way for the city to show appreciation for the many community volunteers who participate in these planning processes is to include them in discussions on how the plan will be implemented.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Brian McMahon