

An Open Letter to Community Organizations in St. Paul and Minneapolis

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From:

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Proposal for a Community Response to CVS Drugstore Building Designs

CVS, a national drugstore chain, has recently decided to enter the Twin Cities metro market. While we welcome their entry, a proposal for their first location in St. Paul, at Snelling and University, does not fit into this urban neighborhood and is contrary to the design principles of all recent community-based planning studies, and does not meet the standards of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Their one-story, suburban style, drive-through building would have a blank wall facing University Avenue, and their main entrance would be located off a rear parking lot. University UNITED, Hamline-Midway Coalition and other neighborhood groups have met with CVS's local developer and attorney on several occasions, and have not detected the interest or the flexibility needed to properly integrate their store into a built-up urban area. The Board of University UNITED has adopted a very strong resolution indicating opposition to this design, posted on the UNITED web page at www.universityunited.com, and attached below.

We are writing to ask for your support. This location in St. Paul is the first of what may be 30 or more stores in the area. What happens on Snelling and University, the most heavily trafficked intersection in the state of Minnesota, will undoubtedly set a precedent for other locations in other urban neighborhoods. Rather than see each affected neighborhood respond to CVS on a case by case basis, we are proposing that all the community groups in St. Paul and Minneapolis work together to pressure the company to create an appropriate urban model, that can be modified to suit a particular site or neighborhood concern. There would be acceptance of basic underlying design principles, incorporating the criteria found in the Metropolitan Council Guidebook on Transit Oriented Development. These would include: multi-story buildings, a mix of land uses, entrance doors and windows on the major street, accommodation to transit and bike riders, and the like.

Would you and your organization be willing to participate in a design charrette for the purpose of developing a store design that would be appropriate for our community? It is hoped that a consensus can be reached on a design that would then be recommended

directly to the CVS corporate headquarters in Rhode Island. Because the Snelling and University proposal is currently before the St. Paul Building Department, time is of the essence. We hope to have our charrette completed before the end of the year.

The charrette will be held Tuesday, December 30, at 2:00 pm, at the University UNITED Planning Center, 704 University Avenue (above the Noodle World Restaurant).

If you do not have time to personally participate in the charrette, would you be willing to consider supporting the design recommendations that come out of this process, and be listed on a cover letter? While this particular issue with CVS is pressing, we also recognize that we may want to explore expanding the scope of the community discussion to look at other national chain stores at some future point.

Thank you for your consideration. We would be most appreciative if you could share this memo with other groups who might have an interest.

Sponsoring Organizations:

University UNITED is a coalition of 12 community organizations six individual business people working to promote positive development along the University Avenue corridor. Its service area extends from the State Capitol to the Minneapolis campus of the University of Minnesota. More information about us can be found at www.universityunited.com.

The Center for Neighborhoods serves as a catalyst to promote and encourage ideas, alliances, policies, and actions that strengthen neighborhoods and their capacity to form livable and vital communities. Additional information can be found at info@center4neighborhoods.org.

The Saint Paul on the Mississippi Design Center is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team whose mission is to enhance the quality of life in St. Paul through high quality design, based on principles contained in, or consistent with, the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework. Additional information can be found at www.riverfrontcorporation.com.

The Hamline Midway Coalition is a community-based non-profit organization dedicated to making the Hamline Midway neighborhood in St. Paul a better place to live and work. Additional information can be found at www.hamlinemidwaycoalition.org

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition that links the religious, social justice and environmental communities to address the issues of economic development, fair and affordable housing, transit and the environmental consequences of sprawling growth. Additional information can be found at www.mepartnership.org/sites/allianceformetrostability.

The Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers is an association of 23 community development organizations committed to expanding the wealth and resources of neighborhoods through housing and economic development initiatives. Additional information can be found at www.mccdmmn.org.

For additional information, call Brian McMahon, University UNITED at (651) 647-6711.

University UNITED Adopts Resolution Opposing CVS Proposal

The Board of University UNITED adopted the following resolution at its meeting on November 17, 2003:

“Whereas CVS is proposing to construct a pharmacy store on the northwest corner of University Avenue and Snelling Avenue;

And whereas the submitted design features a one story building with its only entrance off a rear parking lot, and has no windows or doors facing University Avenue, and is not in conformance with TOD guidelines incorporated within the bylaws of University UNITED, or with the Revitalization Plan for North Snelling Avenue, completed in 2001 by Hamline Midway Corporation, a member of University UNITED;

And whereas, the proposed project is not in conformance with the City’s Comprehensive Plan, the City’s Transportation Plan, the recommendations of the recent Snelling-Lexington TOD Planning Study, or the University Avenue Development Principles, therefore:

University UNITED resolves to oppose the building of this project as currently designed, and urges CVS to consider alternative designs that conform with TOD guidelines,

And further resolves that if CVS is not willing to redesign this project to conform with TOD guidelines, that University UNITED will take all available steps, including the possibility of legal action, to oppose its construction.

Finally, the Board directs that this resolution be disseminated to all stakeholders and interested parties, including CVS.”