



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND INSPECTIONS
375 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 220
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101-1806
Phone: 651-266-8989 Fax: 651-266-9124
Visit our Web Site at www.stpaul.gov/dsi

Board of Zoning Appeals

Staff Report

TYPE OF APPLICATION:	Major Variance	FILE #: DSIBZA-000625-2026
APPLICANT:	Thielen & Green – Kris Thielen	
HEARING DATE:	August 3, 2026	
LOCATION:	649 Snelling Avenue North	
LEGAL DESCRIPTION:	MIDWAY PLAISANCE, ST. PAUL LOTS 1 AND LOT 2 BLK 1	
PLANNING DISTRICT:	D11 - Hamline Midway Coalition	
PRESENT ZONING:	T2 - Traditional Neighborhood	
ZONING CODE REFERENCE:	§ 65.616	
DATE RECEIVED:	July 27, 2026	
REPORT DATE:	July 31, 2026	
DEADLINE FOR ACTION:	September 25, 2026	BY: Kaozouapang Yang

-
- A. **PURPOSE:** The applicant is proposing to convert the existing laundromat into a Domino's Pizza takeout restaurant. Per Section 65.616 of the Zoning Code, curb cuts must be located at least sixty (60) feet from the intersection of any two streets and from any abutting residentially zoned property. This site currently has three (3) existing curb cuts: two (2) along the north side on Blair Avenue and one (1) on the east side along Snelling Avenue. The applicant will remove the curb cut closest to the Blair/Snelling intersection to satisfy the intersection setback. However, the applicant wants to retain the second Blair Avenue curb cut which is located within 60 feet of an abutting residentially zoned property across the alley to the west and requests a variance from the residential setback requirement to allow it to remain.
- B. **SITE AND AREA CONDITIONS:** This is property is approximately 0.2204 acres located on southwest corner of Blair Avenue and Snelling Avenue North.

Surrounding Land Use:
Residential (H2)

C. **ZONING CODE CITATION:**

Sec. 65.616. - Restaurant, fast-food.

- e) Points of vehicular ingress and egress shall be located at least sixty (60) feet from the intersection of any two (2) streets and at least sixty (60) feet from any abutting residentially zoned property.

D. **FINDINGS:**

1. The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.

The applicant is proposing to convert the existing laundromat into a Domino's Pizza takeout restaurant. Per Section 65.616 of the Zoning Code, curb cuts must be located at least sixty (60) feet from the intersection of any two streets and from any abutting residentially zoned property. This site currently has three (3) existing curb cuts: two (2) along the north side on Blair Avenue and one (1) on the east side along Snelling Avenue. The applicant will remove the curb cut closest to the Blair/Snelling intersection to satisfy the intersection setback. However, the applicant wants to retain the second Blair Avenue curb cut which is located within 60 feet of an abutting residentially zoned property across the alley to the west and requests a variance from the residential setback requirement to allow it to remain.

The applicant is removing the Blair Avenue curb cut closest to the intersection, which addresses the code's primary safety concern. That removal eliminates a key conflict point for pedestrians and turning vehicles. On top of that, they're reducing the total number of driveways from three to two, meaning fewer access points for drivers to navigate, which translates directly into simpler and safer traffic flow.

As for the driveway the applicant wants to keep near the residential zone, it's important to note that it's an existing feature, and there's already an alley sitting between that driveway and the homes to the west, a natural physical buffer. The applicant's request is realistic given they're making a modest, reasonable adjustment to an old site constraint. The variance is in harmony with the general intent of Section 65.616. **This finding is met.**

2. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The property is designated Mixed Use on the 2040 Future Land Use Map. In practical terms, that means actively wanting to see existing commercial buildings reused and revitalized rather than sitting vacant.

By converting this laundromat into a restaurant, the applicant is doing exactly what the Comprehensive Plan encourages, giving an old building new life without triggering the environmental and infrastructure costs of new construction. The proposal also improves on-site circulation by separating customer traffic from delivery traffic. This separation reduces congestion and minimizes the chance of conflicts between passenger cars and delivery vehicles.

This is precisely the type of reinvestment the 2040 Plan was designed to support. Therefore,

the variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. **This finding is met.**

3. *The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.*

The practical difficulties are rooted in the physical reality of this specific corner lot. If the applicant were to remove both Blair Avenue curb cuts, every single vehicle, customers, employees, and delivery trucks would have to funnel through the single Snelling Avenue entrance. This would cause maneuvering issues for vehicles, specifically larger delivery trucks. Forcing those trucks to share one narrow access point with customer cars would create backups, tight squeezes, and vehicles backing into traffic. That's not just an inconvenience; that's a legitimate safety concern.

The applicant's compromise by removing the intersection curb cut while keeping the other Blair Avenue one is a reasonable alternative because it results in fewer total driveways, but enough operational separation to keep traffic moving safely.

Based on the difficulty rooted in the site's existing layout and access constraints, the practical difficulty test has been established. **This finding is met.**

4. *The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.*

This property is a corner lot, which presents unique access challenges. We have two street frontages, a building footprint that locks in where driveways can physically go, and three pre-existing curb cuts that were created long before the current owner took over.

When we combine the corner location, the fixed building footprint, the presence of those old curb cuts, and the alley that buffers the residential zone to the west, we get a set of circumstances that are genuinely unique to this parcel and potentially not something shared by every other lot in the district. The current owner didn't build this building, pave these driveways, or create this situation. They simply purchased property with existing conditions and are trying to make it work for a permitted use.

The plight is particular to this property, predates the current ownership, and was not self-created. **This finding is met.**

5. *The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.*

Domino's Pizza is a restaurant, and restaurants are permitted commercial uses. The property stays commercial just as it was when it operated as a laundromat.

The requested variance only allows one existing curb cut to remain in place. It does not authorize a use that would otherwise be prohibited in the district. **This finding is met.**

6. The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

The proposal retains one existing curb cut while removing another curb cut on Blair Avenue closest to the intersection. The project does not change the use of the property and is intended to improve site circulation and pedestrian safety. Staff find the proposed variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. **This finding is met.**

- E. **DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:** As of the date of this report, staff have not received a recommendation from D11 - Hamline Midway Coalition.
- F. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Staff have received emails from neighboring properties opposing the request.
- G. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on the above findings numbered 1 through 6, staff recommends approval.