

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Deadline for Action: September 25, 2026

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS RESOLUTION

ZONING FILE NUMBER: DSIBZA-000625-2026

DATE: August 03, 2026

WHEREAS, Thielen & Green, Kris Thielen, has applied for a variance from the strict application of Section 65.616 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code to convert the existing laundromat into a Domino's Pizza takeout restaurant. Section 65.616 requires curb cuts to be located at least sixty (60) feet from the intersection of any two streets and from any abutting residentially zoned property. The property currently has three (3) existing curb cuts: two (2) on Blair Avenue and one (1) on Snelling Avenue. The applicant proposes to remove the Blair Avenue curb cut closest to the Blair Avenue/Snelling Avenue intersection but retain the remaining Blair Avenue curb cut, which is located within sixty (60) feet of an abutting residentially zoned property across the alley to the west. A variance is requested to allow the existing curb cut to remain on the property located at 649 Snelling Avenue North PIN: 332923110047; and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals conducted a public hearing on August 3, 2026 pursuant to said application in accordance with the requirements of Section 61.303 of the Legislative Code; and

WHEREAS the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals based upon evidence presented at the public hearing, as substantially reflected in the minutes, made the following findings of fact:

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 Board found that the applicant did not demonstrate that allowing the nonconforming curb cut to remain would be consistent with the intent of Section 65.616, which is to minimize conflicts between vehicles and surrounding properties through appropriate curb cut placement. Accordingly, the Board found that the requested variance is not in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code. **This finding is not 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 Board found that the applicant did not establish practical difficulties unique to the property that prevented compliance with Section 65.616. While the applicant stated that retaining the existing curb cut would improve site circulation and facilitate customer and delivery vehicle access, the Board determined that these considerations did not demonstrate that compliance with the ordinance would create practical difficulties. The property can reasonably be used for the proposed restaurant use without retaining the nonconforming curb cut.

Accordingly, the Board found that the applicant failed to establish the practical difficulties required to grant the requested variance. **This finding is not 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 this situation is possibly 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 users' safety. Staff find the proposed variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. **This finding is met.**

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals that, based upon the findings set forth above, the request of Thielen & Green, on behalf of Kris Thielen, for a variance from the strict application of Section 65.616 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code to allow an existing curb cut located within sixty (60) feet of an abutting residentially zoned property to remain in conjunction with the conversion of the existing laundromat into a Domino's Pizza takeout restaurant at 649 Snelling Avenue North (PIN 33.29.23.11.0047), legally described as MIDWAY PLAISANCE, ST. PAUL, LOTS 1 AND 2, BLOCK 1; in accordance with the application for variance and the site plan on file with the Zoning Administrator, **IS HEREBY DENIED.**

MOVED BY: Schweitzer
SECONDED BY: Clarksen
IN FAVOR: 4
AGAINST: 0

MAILED: 9/03/2026

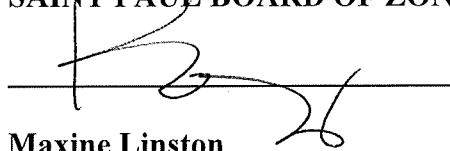
TIME LIMIT: No decision of the zoning or planning administrator, planning commission, board of zoning appeals or city council approving a site plan, permit, variance, or other zoning approval shall be valid for a period longer than two (2) years, unless a building permit is obtained within such period and the erection or alteration of a building is proceeding under the terms of the decision, or the use is established within such period by actual operation pursuant to the applicable conditions and requirements of the approval, unless the zoning or planning administrator grants an extension not to exceed one (1) year.

APPEAL: Decisions of the Board of Zoning Appeals are final subject to appeal to the City Council within 10 days by anyone affected by the decision. Building permits shall not be issued after an appeal has been filed. If permits have been issued before an

appeal has been filed, then the permits are suspended and construction shall cease until the City Council has made a final determination of the appeal.

CERTIFICATION: I, the undersigned Secretary to the Board of Zoning Appeals for the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy with the original record in my office; and find the same to be a true and correct copy of said original and of the whole thereof, as based on approved minutes of the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals meeting held on August 3, 2026 and on record in the Department of Safety and Inspections, 375 Jackson Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

SAINT PAUL BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxine Linston', is written over a horizontal line.

Maxine Linston
Secretary to the Board

