

A Walking Tour of Snelling Avenue, 4/8/2020

By Michael Milner '20



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- It has been 22 days since Minnesota's bars, restaurants, and non-essential businesses were ordered closed by executive order, and Macalester announced the partial closure of campus and the move to remote learning for the rest of the semester. Since then, the landscape of Macalester and the surrounding neighborhood has changed in various ways, some dramatic, others subtle.



Our tour begins on the second floor of the Ruth Stricker-Dayton Campus Center. The building is accessible solely by ID card. This room on the north end of the building remains open.



We are now approaching the intersection of Snelling Ave and Grand Ave. The time is half past five, typically the dead of rush hour, and traffic is unusually light.



Southbound on Snelling we encounter empty parking lots and shuttered businesses. Many storefronts, like that of Sherwin-Williams, advertise curbside pickup.



Although places of worship are closed to the community, many, such as Immanuel Lutheran Church, continue to host Sunday services online.



Students without permission to stay in the dorms have moved out, taking their bicycles with them. Bike racks, like this one next to the Kirk Hall courtyard, stand (mostly) empty.



Macalester's indoor and outdoor athletic facilities are closed. This did not prevent someone from flying a kite on the football field, however.



The sun bakes the pavement of the Leonard Center parking lot, which is typically full of cars during the day.



A dog walker passes a recently-completed apartment building at the corner of Snelling Ave and Saint Clair Ave.



New businesses that have proliferated in recent times along Snelling are either closed to customers or offering curbside pickup.



Businesses have adapted to the pandemic-induced restrictions in various ways. Saint Paul Corner Drug allows its patrons to window shop and place an order by phone call. A chalk circle at the entrance discourages people from congregating close to the door.



We are retracing our steps northbound along Snelling Ave. The time is approaching six o'clock, and traffic is disappearing from the street.



The Leonard Center Athletic and Wellness Complex has been closed to the community since Tuesday, March 17.



Looking eastward at the intersection of Snelling Ave and Lincoln Ave.



Signage outside of Sherwin-Williams paint store promotes curbside pickup in English and Spanish.



It is shortly after six o'clock, and Lincoln Commons is devoid of patrons.



Decorations and signs posted on the windows of Caribou and Coastal Seafoods attempt to reassure customers that they are open, despite appearing vacant.



There is plenty of parking available outside of FedEx, one of the many businesses considering themselves essential and thus remaining open while Governor Walz's stay-at-home order is in effect.



FedEx, like many stores, is limiting the number of patrons allowed inside at any given time.



We resume our tour at the corner of Snelling Ave and Portland Ave. It is shortly after seven o'clock in the evening, and we are headed north along Snelling.



Gasoline prices at Speedway and other gas stations have fallen to levels unseen in years.



Buffalo Wild Wings remains an option for takeout and limits the number of patrons allowed inside. The neighboring fitness center, nail salon, and tanning studio must remain closed to comply with the stay-at-home order.



Traffic on Snelling Ave dwindles.



Cheapo Records waits for the stay-at-home order to be lifted. Now Bikes & Fitness remains open.



Stores and sidewalks sit empty as traffic disappears from Snelling.



Looking south at the corner of Snelling Ave and Selby Ave.



Looking southwest at the corner of Snelling Ave and Selby Ave.



Heavy traffic has mostly subsided along Snelling, except for at the drive thru of Starbucks Coffee.



Signal Garage at the corner of Snelling Ave and Marshall Ave allows only one customer inside the building at a time.



Looking north on Snelling Ave, a cyclist wearing gloves and a face mask approaches.



The Holiday station at the corner of Snelling Ave and Iglehart Ave advertises “free coffee for first responders and medical workers.”



Looking north, approaching a street corner at the intersection of Snelling Ave and Concordia Ave where the homeless frequently collect money from motorists.



Eastbound traffic on Interstate 94 approaches.



A March For Our Lives t-shirt covers a crosswalk button at the intersection of Snelling Ave and St. Anthony Ave.



Work at construction sites, such as this one at the corner of Snelling Ave and Shields Ave, continues.



Looking east at the corner of Snelling Ave and Shields Ave.



Looking northeast across an undeveloped lot at the intersection of Snelling Ave and Shields Ave.



We've reached McDonald's, and also the end of the tour. If you're hungry for a 10 Pc. Chicken McNuggets, you will have to go get your car, as McDonald's nationwide are drive-thru only.



We are returning to Macalester's campus on the A line bus route. Onboard payment and entry through the door at the front of the bus are prohibited.



We are back at Macalester's campus. Thank you for joining this walking tour of Snelling Ave.