

The "Why" Behind the What:

Top motivators for reuniting Fridley into our SLP campus Decisions like these can be tremendously emotional – (which is why we took 9 months to make this decision). It's hard to communicate the hundreds of hours that went into this; but, here are a few of the top motivators for reuniting Fridley into our SLP campus.

* **There's a Maturity-Gap between our Fridley and SLP campus:** According to surveys, those attending our SLP campus are significantly more likely to: (1). Have a tight relationship w/God; (2). Have consistent church attendance; (3). Have a small group; (4). Have greater life-experience; (5) Have grown up in church; &, (6). Have gone through our empowerment track (membership process). i.e., There's an unnecessary division between our best mentors & those who need mentors most. Don't get me wrong: we have great mentors at Fridley. But we simply need *more*. If transformational discipleship is truly our goal, our current configuration is actually hindering this from happening. Right now, we need to prioritize *health* over seating capacity – people over property –especially as we prepare for a building (and the fast growth it usually entails.)

* **Shutting down Fridley is the Least alienating move:** According to our surveys, if Fridley was consolidated, less than 1% said they would stop coming – mainly for ride issues. (& if that's you, call us so we can help). In retrospect, our fast growth and expansion two years ago was probably a bit *too fast*. "Sending out" felt more like "fragmenting." Thus, it's not a surprise that most of the people we surveyed at Fridley were actually excited about seeing their old friends again.

* **There is a Massive Financial Benefit by shutting down Fridley:** Keep in mind: Substance's income is doing better than ever (it's grown by a half million in the last 5 months alone). & despite the large send-off of attendees and staff the last 2 years, our membership is still steadily growing. But the financial benefits of this change are still huge. Aside from rental costs around \$11,000/mo, Fridley needs massive upgrades to survive (E.g, the sound system needs total replacement); & including staffing costs, this move will likely save around \$200,000 each year. And with a gorgeous facility only minutes away, the cost of continuing Fridley doesn't make sense anymore – especially as we save for a building. Also keep in mind: Most affordable land options are closer to SLP. Thus, our Fridley attendees will inevitably need to migrate towards SLP or Northwestern anyway. Certainly, we will eventually launch campuses to the South / East & West. But, over the next 15-24 months, this is not only a prudent financial move but a healthy migratory move as well.

* **We are unnecessarily consuming staff and volunteer bandwidth on portable church logistics** - energy that should be applied to pastoring & discipleship

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processes. Most churches struggle with maintaining *one* kids ministry / worship band / etc. Yet, we accomplish *four* in a *portable atmosphere* (with a fraction of the staff). When a viable campus is less than a few minutes away, this energy could be utilized in a far more transformational way.

* **The closeness of our current campuses undermines our ability to create deep community.** It's common for members to jump between campuses (E.g., people serve at one; attend another). But there are additional factors that increase churn. (E.g.,) "Why go see a 'video message' when you can have it *live* 5 minutes away?" Pastor Greg Surratt (a mentor who leads a church with 15 campuses) recently told us: "An 'all-video' venue needs to be, at least, 15 minutes away from the live-preaching campus to ever truly thrive." (Of course, we're learning new things about "multi-site church" every year!) Hence, in the future, we will likely create more distance between our campuses.

* **Our Fridley Campus is becoming a Serious Hindrance to our Kids & Family Ministries.** Substance has always struggled retaining 30 & 40-somethings due to the inadequate kid spaces at locations like Fridley. People constantly tell us, "*We love Substance; but, we had to change for our kids.*" (& in the big scheme of things, this loss of mentors & income has been significant). Put simply, we cannot continue doing church in a way that's hostile to families – especially when we have a gorgeous family friendly foyer & kid-space at SLP.

Nationally, churches/campuses with less than 1000 attendees tend to be horrible at attracting 30 & 40-somethings. & Why? Think about it: our kids want friends too— & when only *four* "9-yr olds" show up – a common occurrence in smaller churches—it's not only awkward or socially constricting for kids, but it's demoralizing for our volunteers to teach a lesson designed for *thirty* 9-yr olds! (& the best curriculums are all designed for bigger groups). Our volunteers at Fridley & SLP have been amazing; but, it's time we equip them with better facilities & better "critical mass."

Also, churches with small foyers & kid spaces have the same problem. & Why? No one wants to drop off their kids in a grungy/small kid-space. Also, families struggle to attend church programs *outside of* Sunday services (& once you have kids, you'll understand! :) – thus, we'd love to offer programs (like Start / SHIFT or Dave Ramsey) at local campuses *on Sunday mornings*. (Indeed, we aim to have an entire coffee shop / small group area at SLP that families can hang out in during services). But none of this is possible at Fridley – due to terrible parking, foyer & kid-space problems.

* **Final Thoughts...** We realize that change can be tough! Realize, we are *terribly nostalgic* about Fridley (esp. Pastor Peter!) Yet, we're confident that our upgrades will make you say, "Wow!" And continue praying with us. None of our current buildings are *permanent* nor *guaranteed*. We appreciate your grace. And we'd love your feedback: email: "feedback@substancechurch.com"

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