

March 2, 2021

Dear Honorable Members of the St. Paul City Council,

I respectfully ask that you include the Student Overlay District as stated in Ord 21-4: Amending the zoning code as recommended in the Definition of Family Zoning Study.

“Ma’am, No student feels welcome in your neighborhood.” These are the words of a University of St. Thomas (UST) African-American Student Leader after a 2019 racial slur incident at UST.

I wish I could un-hear that.

On Saturday I participated in a *“Jim Crow of the North”* viewing and discussion sponsored by the St. Anthony Community Council (SACC). People who work with the Mapping Prejudice project taught us about the Restrictive Covenants that made Macalester Groveland the whitest district in St. Paul.

I wish I didn’t know that the majority of the neighbor representatives on the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) continue to demand to use similar Restrictive Covenants to discriminate against student renters.

We are called to recognize the systemic racism that is responsible for our inequitable community. We are also called to recognize what creates the systemic discrimination against students in our neighborhood that is responsible the UST student’s response to the question, *“Do you feel welcome in our neighborhood?”*

I wish I didn’t feel responsible for writing to you this morning after attending last night’s Macalester Groveland Community Council’s (MGCC) Housing and Land Use meeting. But, If not me, who? I live closer to UST than almost any neighbor. I served six years on the neighbor advisory committee created by the UST Conditional Use Permit (CUP) with the purpose, as the previous co-chair wrote, “to be adversarial”. I am a landlord who has rented to students in both Macalester Groveland and Union Park for 24 years.

The restrictions in the Student Overlay District are more than adequate to maintain housing balance in our community of human beings. As much any community in St. Paul, we need your help to practice the first Core Value of the 2040 Plan, Equity and Inclusion. Please include the Student Overlay District as stated in Ord 21-4: Amending the zoning code as recommended in the Definition of Family Zoning Study.

Respectfully,

Catherine Plessner
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