

From: Luke Walbert
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 1:46 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4
Subject: Student Rental Ordinance

Hi, Russ. I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed student rental restriction overlay district around the University of St. Thomas.

One thing I have never heard anyone adequately explain is why this form of housing ordinance isn't a case of discrimination by proxy. Although the explicit terms of the restriction may be geographic, the implicit terms with it being on undergraduate students with a district around UST appears in effect to disproportionately limit the housing options of St. Paul residents who are between the ages of 18 and 22 and Roman Catholic. There is a long tradition in America of people manipulating the law to discriminate in housing, voting, employment etc, doing it in a sneaky way because the demographic characteristics of the group targeted for discrimination is not explicitly stated in the proposed laws. I am concerned whether St. Paul could end up using its resources to defend this restriction in court when it seems fairly obvious that from an equal housing opportunity perspective it is not really defensible.

Proponents of this overlay district and rental restriction approach seem to have unrealistic expectations of how it will mitigate the behavioral problems people are complaining about. If the behavioral regulations (such as social host ordinances) have been inadequate to curb the problem, what makes them think that yet another regulation will solve those problems? And even if this ordinance and district have effect on reducing the undesirable behaviors, will it reduce them in noticeable, measurable amounts? Or will the improvements be at best incremental, so that it would be objectively debatable whether they resulted from the new regulations or merely from the random transitions in the population of the neighborhood?

Finally, this proposal does nothing to help people like me who live near other post-secondary institutions. I'm two doors from a noisy duplex of mostly students and despite several police visits, it's been ongoing source of disturbance of our block's tranquility for years. It's unfair to cater to the people around UST and do nothing comparable for residents near other colleges and universities in St. Paul.

Thanks for your attention.

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