

August 16, 2011

Dear St. Paul City Council Members:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the increase in student housing over the past ten years.

We moved to Merriam Park in 2001 and were excited to be in an area where there were families who had been here for generations. Our neighbors included young and old residents who looked out for one another. Evenings and weekends were quiet. As many single-family homes have become rental property for college students, much of this feeling and experience has changed.

It is now normal for us to expect to be woken up between midnight and two a.m. by groups of loud, drunken students who are wandering between parties held at rental properties in the neighborhood. The disruption is becoming tiring and is not helped when we find our own and neighbor's property effected as well. It is now common knowledge that porch furniture, garden features such as bird baths, benches, etc. will be overturned, smashed, or stolen. Our own porch chairs have been lifted from our front porch and placed in the middle of the street, surrounded by empty beer cans. Footsteps through are garden were visible where students had walked to our porch railing and handed the chairs over to carry out to the street. It is common to find empty liquor bottles and beer cans, sometimes even vomit, in our yards as well.

The sentiment in the neighborhood is that we have become a playground for reckless, negligent college students who we end up picking up after. Relations between residents and college students are tense. Our neighborhood is fed-up with paying hefty property taxes while we watch our property values plummet as other neighborhoods remain stable or increase (Mac-Groveland, Highland Park, etc.). Increasingly, it also becomes impossible to park in front of our own homes as student houses take up spaces to accommodate all of their renters or cannot find free parking on their campus. In addition to our increasing property taxes (nearly \$5,000 annually), we also will face paying the city for annual permits to park in front of our own homes to unload groceries and children and be inconvenienced with having to request and return extra permits for visitors.

Please approve this moratorium to study the effects of student housing in our neighborhood. Show us that you are listening and that you can see that this is a neighborhood worth fighting for.

Sincerely,

Sarah Smith
1906 Laurel Avenue