

Ward 6 Comments regarding Ordinance 21-4 "Amending the zoning code as recommended in the Definition of Family Zoning Study" (24.February.2021):

From: richard nelson
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 4:28 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Change in Zoning Code

Dear Council Person Yang - As a life-long citizen of St Paul, I am contacting you about the proposed changes to the single dwelling zoning ordinance and the corresponding increase in adult occupants.

During the past 2 weeks I have canvassed my neighborhood about the proposed zoning change. Everyone I talked with is 100% in agreement with the need for the changes and the proposed language.

However, everyone (including St Thomas students who live in these homes) asks that you consider how these changes will impact those of us living in the unique Student Housing Impact District. We ask you to support the recent resolution of WSNAC that would exempt the Student Zone from this proposal. Student housing has nothing to do with the changing dynamics of the family.

A 50 percent increase in the number of students in our neighborhood will be devastating. We love living in the student community but have had our share of horrible experiences with students over the last 20 years.... all night parties, urination and littering on our lawn, over-crowded houses, increased car traffic, refusal to wear masks ,etc. I'm sure you have heard all of this before. Students have been subject to over-crowding by their landlords causing very serious safety issues.

We ask you to please exempt the Student Housing Impact District from the zoning changes. Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I look forward to your response.

Thank you so much,
Rick Nelson

From: Margaret Wirth-Johnson
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 10:42 AM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: James Johnson <johns007@umn.edu>
Subject: Housing rules change

Dear Councilmember Yang:

We urge you to oppose inclusion of the Student Rental Overlay District in the proposed changes to the definitions of family and the occupancy limits in relation to dwelling type that would allow up to 6 (rather than 4) residents per unit. Neighborhoods in the Student Rental Overlay District are struggling already with overcrowding (parking, traffic, noise, trash) and transient, sometimes inconsiderate residents; this was reason for establishing these districts. A 50% increase in the occupancy of student rental properties in those neighborhoods would seriously degrade the neighborhoods livability and appeal for most permanent residents, without serving the needs of many actual families; the main beneficiaries would be landlords.

Margaret Wirth-Johnson and James Johnson

From: Kristina Kliber

Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 2:08 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Proposal to change the zoning code - March 3rd Vote

Keith Koch and Kristina Kliber

We have lived in the Shadow Falls neighborhood of Merriam Park for over fourteen years. The current student housing overlay district is a critical tool to support a balanced community. The proposed zoning change to allow any 6 unrelated adults to live in a single-family home or a duplex will immediately destabilize the neighborhood.

On our side of the block (South-side of Dayton between Cretin/Exeter), there currently are two duplexes, and one single-family home student rental. The student overlay requirements have resulted in a nearly exact balance of students (currently at 20) to long-term residents (currently at 16). If the zoning change is allowed in the current student overlay district, there is the potential of 30 student renters on one side of the street alone, which tips the balance nearly 2 to 1.

There are key differences between student renters and other renters -, which we also have on the block. The students typically move in at the end of August and move out at the end of May, leaving behind towers of garbage in the alley. Subletters fill the housing during the summer months, often using them as party pads. This leads to no sense of community or ownership due to the constant turnover.

The proposed zoning change does not address racial, social, or economic disparities in housing. Current absentee-owners of student housing will take this zoning change as a green light to charge additional rent without investing a dime in their properties or our community. It will not bring new folks and families of different backgrounds into the neighborhood.

It will only bring one group that for the last fourteen years has been a near-constant drain on the community that we call home. It will bring additional cars and traffic on an already packed street (even after using parking permit restrictions), additional garbage to already over-flowing garbage cans. It will bring additional nights of drunken screaming and public urination.

We are disappointed that the city is considering such a large change without study or data in the overlay district. The creation of the student overlay district took considerable time, analysis, and care in defining the area – with specific goals that resulted in a necessary balance of students/long-term residents for the compact geographic area. Before any changes within the student-overlay district, we would expect the same disciplined approach to study, data, and neighborhood and university involvement.

We urge you to maintain the current zoning limit of 4 unrelated adults in a housing unit in the student housing overlay district and oppose the increase to 'any 6' unrelated adults.

Thank you,

Keith Koch and Kristina Kliber

From: Joel Clemmer
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2021 8:47 AM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: households in Student Housing Overlay District

Dear Council member Yang,

I write in opposition to the proposal to allow six unrelated persons to occupy a dwelling unit in proximity to the University of Saint Thomas. If approved, this will threaten recent positive changes to our fraught town-gown relationship and will be a detriment to my neighborhood.

I have some background with the issue, having been a member and president of the Macalester Groveland Community Council and member of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee. The problem of UST student rentals took up much of my time in both positions. I attach a report, written with UST's Doug Hennes, which outlined the problems. Thankfully, some of them have been resolved by the on-campus requirement at UST.

In fact, Saint Paul and UST made real progress in these and subsequent years. After passage of the 150' student rental spacing requirement, the attendant overlay district and UST's on-campus requirement, I thought we were approaching stability, if not resolution, of a frustrating problem.

It was therefore astounding to me to hear of the proposal to increase allowed "unrelateds" per household by 50%, to six each. Within the Student Housing Neighborhood Impact Overlay District, this would be a huge mistake. This is because the dynamics within the Overlay District differ from those elsewhere in the city.

Within the Overlay District, there is a delicate balance between single-family households and student rentals. Because the effects are not life-threatening, it is difficult to convey the debilitating frustration of living in proximity to some student rentals. This is not just aesthetics nor a snobby NIMBY attitude. It is real feelings of security, peacefulness and confidence in the future of one's household. The proposal, if allowed, will encourage the growth of student rentals and erase our recent progress.

I understand the value of increasing density across the City and do not expect to reverse the trend toward rentals. I am saying that we must manage such trends in a sensitive and responsive manner. The Student Housing Neighborhood Impact Overlay District exists for a reason and the reason is that its neighborhoods are subject to special strains. Our ordinances, if they are to have general value, must respect such local conditions.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Saint Paul.

Joel Clemmer

From: JEFF & CHRISTINE JOHNSON
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2021 10:23 AM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Keep the student housing overlay district, do not increase to 6 students!

Hello Council Member:

I have been a resident of St Paul for seventeen years, have three school aged children and have lived in two different areas of St Paul (Lincoln Ave and Portland Ave) with a high density of University of St Thomas students. I find the student rental ordinance that was instituted by former council member, Russ Stark, to be a life-line to the neighborhood. Undergraduate college students who rent housing for 1-2 years are not the kind of nontraditional family unit that the study was meant to address, and there is arguably no-good reason to apply the broader zoning change to student rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District.

The livability of our neighborhood is already questionable. We have two rentals and one student-owned rental on our short block. We hear late-night parties and day-time parties with obscene language being used while our children are playing outside. We have parking and trash issues. The homes with students are not as well kept as owner occupied homes (sidewalks are not cleared of snow, there is minimal landscaping and upkeep issues). Students have a transient nature and are not interested in becoming a part of our neighborhood. We have invited the students to join us for National Night Out and neighborhood gatherings with students declining to attend.

My family needs and wants community in our neighborhood. Adding additional students further takes away from the livability of our neighborhood and removes the safety net put in place in 2012. Had I known before we moved to Portland Ave that students would be allowed to increase in our neighborhood, I would have moved to the suburbs long ago. Please help to keep this neighborhood from having to deal with more of the above problems.

Sincerely,

Christine Johnson

From: Chris Parker

Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 1:10 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Concerns About City Zoning Code Change

Dear Council member Yang,

I understand that changing the city zoning code definition of "family"

would remove the housing barriers for nontraditional families and I'm all for that.

What I am concerned about is if this change would allow student renter limits to increase from four to six students. I don't think student households should fall under the same category as nontraditional families. I see student households as unofficial sorority/fraternity houses with unfortunately all the negative baggage that comes with them.

Landlords would be more likely to rent to students because they can make more money than they would if renting to a nontraditional family.

Susy Gilbert

From: Kelly Vinson-Taylor
Sent: Sunday, February 28, 2021 10:01 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Student Overlay District

Councilmember Yang,

I'm writing to express that I strongly oppose removing the Student Overlay District around the University of St. Thomas and increasing non-related adults living in homes to 6 people. The overlay district has been very successful in maintaining a balance of student rentals and owner-occupied homes which has resulted in a diverse and welcoming neighborhood for students, families with young children, and retirees alike, which is why I chose to move to the neighborhood 17 years ago.

In addition to several new apartment developments going up on Marshall which are specifically intended for students, removing the Student Overlay District will quickly shift the neighborhood makeup, which is already beyond a tipping point, to a neighborhood of mainly student rentals. I am already aware of neighbors who are questioning whether to make improvements to their homes and are considering leaving the neighborhood. While I love my home, living in a neighborhood predominantly made up of student rentals which will increase foot/car traffic, house parties, homes in disrepair is not at all appealing and I will likely sell. Do you really want the neighborhoods surrounding St. Thomas to look like the neighborhoods surrounding the Minneapolis campus of the U of M?

I urge you to keep the Overlay District and keep the maximum number of non-related adults to 4 per home around the University of St. Thomas.

Kind regards,

Kelly Vinson-Taylor

From: Chris Parker
Sent: Monday, March 1, 2021 5:15 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: The impact of upcoming vote on zoning code

Dear Council member Yang,

I understand that you're about to vote on a proposal to change the zoning code in a manner that will ultimately allow up to six students to live in a student rental dwelling.

I'm very much in favor of improving housing opportunities for non-traditional households. But this change would also allow landlords to squeeze more students into student housing. The Student Housing Overlay District has been a wonderful thing for our neighborhood, and this change would weaken it.

Landlords could make more money renting to six individual students than they would if renting to a nontraditional family, so in student housing areas, the change wouldn't have the hoped-for effect, and would in fact lower the quality of life, and the desirability of owning a home in the neighborhood.

Which brings up a larger point, one that this specific proposal can't fully cover, but it's worth stating: I hope that all your decisions encourage home ownership for households of all sorts, rather than rental housing.

Unless you've lived next to a St. Thomas party house, or several of those, you can't fully appreciate what a one-issue voter it can make of you. Please don't create a step backward for our neighborhood.

Chris Parker

From: Bill Lindeke <blindeke@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 9:47 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_CC-Ward6 <CC-Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Comment on Definition of Family policy

Dear Council Member:

I've been studying the history of planning in Saint Paul and US cities for many years. I wanted to share my thoughts with you about the use of the "definition of family" in City Code as a policy and zoning tool.

The definition of family policy comes from the intersection of two problematic historical social realities. The first is a set of patriarchal assumptions about gender norms and how people should live. Victorian-era thinkers created powerful ideological constraints around gender and families. Through a set of religious, class-based, and moralistic social codes, influential people created expectations about how and where families should live, including that women should remain in the home, and that good "Christian" people required these kinds of heteronormative environments in order to avoid immorality.

The flip side of this ideology was that people who lived in diverse, complex urban spaces were morally inferior. Meanwhile, many forms of social castigation applied to women who resisted the confines of this value system. Many early assumptions about city life, in particular the supposed superiority of single-family neighborhoods, stemmed from this oppressive cultural tradition, which was baked into the zoning code in numerous ways. The definition of family — which for decades excluded domestic servants — was the most explicit expression of this moralistic zoning .

The other historical origin of this rule is even worse: anti-immigrant racism. Typically, people who arrived in cities like St. Paul brought with them cultures and traditions that relied on complex family and community ties for many different forms of mutual support. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and acquaintances often formed larger communities of solidarity, or these ties were forged in diverse communities in their new country. Together, as a "family," people would pitch in to purchase property, take care of chores or improvement projects, help with child care, provide cultural connections, and many other things besides.

You can trace family definition policies directly to the racist worldview that saw immigrant communities and traditions as problematic and inferior. Anti-immigrant racism, which was quite prevalent throughout the 20th century, led to the widespread adoption of the definition of family as a way to limit the options of immigrants, people of color, and non-WASP cultural groups. In fact, in St. Paul, keeping immigrants out of the certain neighborhoods, and away from the city as a whole, was an explicit goal stated openly in city planning documents as recently as the late 1950s. While that language has thankfully been exorcised from city documents, the definition of family, which comes from many of the same motives, is still on the books.

Moralistic assumptions about what constitutes a “family” have no place in our City Code. There is no excuse for a city like St. Paul, that purports to be working toward building an anti-racist society, to keep these kinds of rules on the books. Please get rid of it.

Thanks,

Bill Lindeke

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urban geographer

tcsidewalks.blogspot.com

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From: Rachel Westermeyer

Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 4:53 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: PLEASE VOTE TO EXEMPT THE STUDENT HOUSING OVERLAY DISTRICT FROM THE PROPOSED CITY ZONING CHANGE

Dear Nelsie,

I am asking for your vote to EXEMPT the Student Housing Overlay District from the current zoning proposed changes throughout the City. Increasing density in student rentals in this already saturated student rental area would not bode well in the long run for the students, the neighbors, and the long term stability of this area. I could cite all the difficulties, but have chosen to keep this email brief.

Please SERIOUSLY consider my request.

Thank you so much.

Rachel M. Westermeyer

From: Scott Heiderich

Sent: Tuesday, March 2, 2021 3:23 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us >

Subject: Saint Paul Planning Committee Resolution #21-02

I am writing you today to ask that you vote on the above resolution where City of Saint Paul Chapter 67-Zoning Code, and the overlay districts so described in the present code remain in effect as it presently exists, after you vote on Resolution #21-02. In particular, we are talking about the Student Overlay District involving the neighborhoods around the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul.

My wife and I have lived in our house on Portland Avenue, two and a half blocks east of the UST for almost 50 years now. During that period of time, the College of Saint Thomas has changed from a small men only college with a limited number of students, into a coeducational University of thousands of students. We have lived with this change and had to react to it by introducing permit parking on the streets surrounding the campus to include parts of Merriam Park and Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods and then other restrictions as well, to include finally the present 2012 Student District Overlay Area which limits off campus student housing. The basic rule is three of four students per household and that is for a single family rental unit and a duplex allows for two groups of four students, triplex three groups of four students and etc. Unless they are grandfathered in prior to 2012, all such student dwellings have to have their property boundaries located at least 150 feet from any other student property. We have also seen rentals where parents rent the housing unit in their name and their adult child and are exempt from this distancing rule or need to register the house as student housing. We have also seen parents purchase a house on my block where their college adult student is on the property title as an owner and she can live there with up to 3 other students without distancing from a registered student housing unit. Unless you live in our neighborhood and have seen what can occur with uncontrolled student numbers in our housing units, you probably can not understand our concern about throwing away the present Overlay District for our neighborhoods around the UST. Please do not allow this to change.

The problem is having six (6) students in a residential unit versus four! A 50% increase in our neighborhood. And it appears that it would also allow four students and two friends to also live in the unit.

Yes, the University of Saint Thomas has added two new large dormitories to their campus and they expect to have all freshmen and sophomores living in those two buildings, and it appears that includes even the present freshmen and sophomores who otherwise would commute from their local homes to the campus for school classes. But, it was not so much those underclass students who lived in rentals off campus, but the upper class students who sought to rent in the neighborhood, so we do not expect there to be much of a reduction of students seeking to live off campus.

In any case, please leave the Overlay District presently in force in the books, and if there is a need to change that in a future year, well study it and decide then. It appears as though the Planning Commission did not take much time at all to study the Overlay District. They simply voted to change if from 4 students to 6 students without a study and in my opinion included no out reach to the neighborhood or our district councils to discuss the change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ronald SCOTT Heiderich

From: Scott Heiderich <scotth1300@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2021 8:53 AM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Changing Chapter 67.703

Well today is the big day. The final vote on the new Ordinance for Housing in Saint Paul. I expect that you all will be voting to approve this change in "family structure". But I am truly alarmed at your move to change Chapter 67.703, the SH STUDENT HOUSING NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT OVERLAY DISTRICT. Please reconsider your vote of last week on this item. This is not something dated from the 1970s, it was established in 2012 and it is still very important to keep in place. Yes, I am concerned with allowing student housing in the overlay to allow not just the four students in a rental unit, but now to increase it to as many as 6 undergraduate students to occupy such units. This has nothing to do with the new family designation, and it would mean up to a 50% increase in those students living in the district. As far as I can figure, there has been no study done by either the Planning Commission nor the City Council that would suggest that this is a good idea. And, because of the pandemic, it seems that there has been little or no chance for residents of this area to comment on this particular part of the Ordinance change about to be passed. It appears as though my Council Person has decided that we should try this out and see how it goes, without any real chance for input from the people who will have to live with this, and perhaps it would be difficult to ever return to the limit of four unrelated undergrads living in a housing unit. Frankly, this only involves UNDERGRAD STUDENTS, it does not involve any other renting in the Overlay District. And there is no way to know in advance if the new freshman and sophomore dorms at the University of Saint Thomas will reduce off campus rental demands at all!

So, why is this happening? Well, for what it is worth, I think that two things are involved here. First, many years ago, the City Council was made up of members elected in the City at large. No wards represented by individual members. The problem seemed to be, that for items to consider that were only for one neighborhood (now ward) had to get approval from city wide elected members, who never seemed much concerned with neighborhood items. So everything was changed, and a ward system with one member representing only their ward, could support or not support something in a neighborhood that they represented. And, since then, almost everything a ward representative supported or did not support was the lead in how the Council as a whole voted. "I will support what you want to support in your ward, and then you support what I want supported in my ward". After all, you know your ward best, right? Well that works okay in most cases, but not when there is little or no opportunity for the neighborhood impacted, by no public hearings, and a representative Council person who has no knowledge or experience in the ward they represent and will not even talk directly with their constituents about the subject area prior to their supporting their own personal view with lack of personal knowledge of the history of the situation. And a Planning Commission that appears to have voted in a similar manner with again no real input from the neighborhood involved.

So, with this overlay district Chapter 67.703, only involving NON UNDERGRAD STUDENTS in housing, why the rush to change from 4 students to 6 students in the overlay district? It does not involve changing "Family" to "Household" in the Planning Commission report!

Please reconsider your vote last week on Chapter 67.703 regarding UNDERGRAD STUDENTS living off campus in the Overlay District.

Ronald SCOTT Heiderich

From: Noelle Jacquet-Morrison <quinnford01@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2021 7:50 AM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward6 <Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Student Housing Overlay District, request for a pause on occupancy changes

The West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC) continues to support the new definition of “Family” that the City of St. Paul has proposed as it reflects the ever-changing cultural landscape of our city. We do request, however, that the council exempt the registered student rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District from such a change for 18 to 24 months, until more qualitative and quantitative data can be collected on the following impacts:

- To student safety, to already-high rental rates for student housing, to the number of properties affected in the Overlay District, and to the quality-of-life issues that already burden some residents who live near the University of St. Thomas campus.

On March 9, 2021 WSNAC passed a resolution to request that the St. Paul City Council put a pause on raising the number of unrelated adults allowed to live in one structure in registered rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District until more data — in the form of both numbers and neighbor voices, including student voices — can be compiled. This pause would apply only to student housing in the Overlay District where more than 70 percent of St. Thomas students who live off campus are residing.

WSNAC would finance a study and develop its various components in partnership with city agencies in charge of ensuring compliance with the various ordinances that regulate rentals. WSNAC has proposed that this data analysis be conducted as a project from the St. Thomas Opus College of Business or by an outside agency, such as the Smith Report that guided the development of the Student Housing Overlay District a decade ago: <http://wsnac.net/media/wsnac/pdfs/LouisSmithfinalreport.pdf>

WSNAC further requests that this pause be 18 to 24 months in length, thus allowing the research project to collect relevant information on the several influencers that will reshape the landscape of the Overlay District. Those include:

- A two-year on-campus residency requirement, to be enacted fully in fall 2022.
- Landlord engagement on pricing structures, which now run from \$750 to \$1,000 per bed.
- A better understanding of which single-family houses and duplexes in the Overlay District would be affected by a higher occupancy maximum.
- How the Department of Safety and Inspections will oversee the impacts of an occupancy change (in a neighborhood where student over-occupancy already is a problem).
- Students’ point of view on how living with more roommates would affect their own quality of life and their pocketbooks.

We thank Matt Privratsky, the Ward 4 legislative aide, for his ongoing presence at WSNAC and his forthright sharing of information, including at last night’s meeting. Councilmember Jalali, what you are proposing in the Overlay is a consequential change. Please allow us to engage with you and other city officials in ensuring that this is the right course of action for all.

I submit this respectfully as co-chair of WSNAC, as a Merriam Park resident, and as a constituent who knows that you value thoughtful engagement and decision-making guided by data.