

Hi Mr. Williams -

I will be a sophomore at Macalester in the fall, and while I can't attend the hearing because I'm home in Portland, Oregon for the summer, I would definitely be present if I were in town. As someone who is planning and relishing living off campus after my sophomore year, this ordinance affects me in a negative way. My peers who live off-campus are respectful and courteous people, and have only mentioned complimentary things about the neighborhood, their neighbors, or their landlords - nothing negative. In order to gain some understanding of the issue, I read through the entire "In Support" document, featuring letters and emails from neighborhood residents arguing that the rowdy behavior that accompanies students living off-campus had reached a point of oversaturating the neighborhood, the ordinance being the solution to the problem. I found it interesting that every complaint had to do with the University of St. Thomas, and not a single one mentioned Macalester. I think this is an important distinction. While St. Thomas may be growing, Macalester has stayed right around 1900-2000 students for the past four years, and my graduating class will be the smallest on campus in the fall - minus the incoming freshman class. So, by the time I reach my senior year, there will most likely be fewer Macalester students living off campus than there are today.

Secondly, I think the distinction between UST and Mac goes beyond enrollment. Macalester attracts a type of student that is very self-aware for his/her age, and who cares deeply about the impact they have on their surroundings. I know this is the typical catchphrase you might see on a Mac pamphlet, but after a year in the school, I can attest for myself that this is true. From a cultural standpoint, the behavior detailed in these letters would be appalling at Mac. We had an incident at our Winter Formal where several students were overly intoxicated and vandalized the building it was hosted in. As a result, several letters to the editor of the Mac Weekly, one by the Dean of Student Life but most by fellow students, detailing their shock and disappointment at how Mac students could behave in this way. While Mac students are obviously not immune to this behavior, I have never seen a fight, broken glass, or vandalism at an off-campus party, and when they are occasionally broken up by police, students leave quietly and respectfully. This is not a put-down of UST; it is a fine school, but this is one area where I think Macalester really excels and is well above average.

Finally, Mac's integration with the neighborhood is central to its character. When I applied to college, I looked at several other well-regarded liberal arts schools, almost identical to Mac on paper. However, I ultimately decided on Mac because of its location - I was impressed with the Twin Cities when I visited, and over the course of the past year, have grown to think of them as my true home. I look forward to moving off campus and integrating with the broader St. Paul community, and definitely envision myself living here after college. However, Mac is expensive, and I'm going into debt to attend. Living off campus is currently cheaper than living on campus, but this ordinance will jack up rent prices to the point that living on campus is potentially the cheaper option. If this is the case, I'll live on campus all four years and not be able to connect with the Cities in the same way I would if I lived off campus. Many, many students share this stance with me, and if we were all deprived of what the city has to offer, that'd be a huge shame.

This ordinance appears to not solve much. College is college - students will drink. And short of condemning *all* off-campus housing, including current student housing, I don't see how this ordinance will stop that. Although I understand that this oversaturation must be frustrating to someone who has lived in the neighborhood for 40 years (as some in favor have), Mac-Groveland housed five colleges well before they moved in, and the "college town" atmosphere certainly preceded their arrival. From a student's point of view, this ordinance will only serve to alienate the college communities from the broader neighborhood. Having grown up in a city similar to St. Paul (Portland) near a very similar college (Reed), I can tell you that this dynamic is not desirable. Most Portlanders view Reedies as elitist, weird, and completely uninterested in the broader Portland community, and it has caused such a problem that Reed recently hired its new President, John Kroger, for the express purpose of creating a stronger bond with the city. This ordinance will push the Mac-Groveland neighborhood towards a similar dynamic, something I doubt any local resident or student would enjoy.

Sincerely,

Will Kent-Daggett
Macalester College '11