

June 13, 2012

Sarah Smith

1906 Laurel Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55104

Dear St. Paul City Council Members:

You have likely read many letters from Merriam Park residents about how our quality of life has been affected by the increased concentration of students and student rental in the neighborhood. I am writing to tell you that *when we first moved here, 11 years ago, there were no student problems*. We had a one year old at the time, I was active on our block with other young families and got to know people who had raised their families here and are now grandparents. I spent a great deal of time gardening, spending time with our toddler, and enjoying being able to support local businesses within walking distance of our home. We also invested in our home by adding a two-story addition as we imagined we would live here until we were no longer able to shovel the sidewalk and weed the gardens. *It was after all, the perfect neighborhood for us: a community neighborhood of people of all ages who took care of their homes and respected their neighbors.*

*Our community; however, has changed.* Today, for example, we have at least six student rented houses within two blocks of us—a 50% increase in conversion of single family owned houses to student rental from when we first moved here. The concentration of student rented houses that were previously owned by families has changed our quality of life and is not the neighborhood we knew 11 years ago. The steady increase in the number of student houses around us has altered our quality of life on a regular and persistent basis. As each Thursday approaches, we brace for being awakened in the middle of the night by students who begin their weekend then. They are drunk, loud, and disruptive. There have been fistfights and drunken brawls right outside our home, as we are in close proximity to houses that are now student rentals and we are located on the paths that are frequented by students who wander in a drunken state between parties hosted at these houses. We experience this regularly now and have placed electric fans in our daughters' rooms to dampen the noise so that our children can sleep through the night. We have cleaned up vomit, beer cans and liquor bottles from our porch, yard and boulevard, repaired lawn furniture destroyed by roving bands of drunken students, and helped neighbors do the same.

Our community is no longer peaceful, it is no longer predictable, it is no longer a place we recognize as the home and the community we moved into 11 years ago.

If the concentration of student rentals continues to increase, this will no longer be a community of families but a ghetto of student rentals with liquor bottles on boulevards and abandoned couches on front lawns. It would be in the interest of the city to ensure that its tax-paying residents are listened to and relied upon as a trusted and valued source of information and concern.

Please recognize and support our concerns and our investment by passing this ordinance and helping us preserve our neighborhoods. We are deeply concerned about our community and **we are turning to you to help us by passing this ordinance so that our community will remain balanced, viable, and intact.**

Thank you for taking the time to review these concerns and to consider what you would want if it were your own neighborhood. We support this ordinance.

Sincerely,

Sarah Smith

1906 Laurel Avenue