

**From:** [Mark Gilbert](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul>Contact-Council](#)  
**Subject:** Allowing 4 Units Per Lot  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 13, 2023 5:54:08 PM

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Greetings!

This is the text of a letter suggested by Sustain St. Paul, regarding the 1-4 Unit Housing Study Amendments. I have read it carefully, and I agree with every word. I really think that allowing and encouraging the construction of more housing is the most important issue facing our city.

*Dear City Council,*

*I'm writing to urge you to vote "YES" for the proposed 1-4 Unit Housing Study amendments to the Zoning Code. Here are a few reasons why the proposed changes would be a big step forward for Saint Paul:*

- 1. Many Saint Paul neighborhoods lack the variety of housing types that our residents need, because current rules only allow single-family houses with large yards. Our neighborhoods need more choices that mirror our residents' diverse housing needs: townhouses, duplexes, small apartments, and tiny homes.*
- 2. Our city doesn't have enough homes for the people who want to live here. This drives up housing prices and rents, hurting prospective homebuyers and renters alike. If we want Saint Paul to be an affordable place to own or rent a home, we should make it easier to build more homes.*
- 3. Saint Paul is struggling to maintain our streets, and to fully fund our libraries, schools, parks, and rec centers. At the same time, residents are struggling to afford the annual increases to their property taxes. By making it legal to house more people in the same amount of space, these proposed zoning changes can help increase the number of people sharing the cost of paying for the public infrastructure and services our city needs.*
- 4. The proposed changes would enable progress towards the goals of our city's Climate Action Resilience Plan. Transportation is the top source of greenhouse gas emissions in Saint Paul, and the best way for our city to reduce its collective carbon footprint is by making it easier for people to reduce their reliance on cars. We need more "walkable" neighborhoods, where residents enjoy access to grocery stores, pharmacies, gathering places, transit routes, and other important destinations and services within a short walk of their homes. Legalizing more homes in every neighborhood is the first step towards creating walkable places, since businesses and transit routes can't succeed without a critical mass of customers.*

*I strongly support both the stated goal of the proposed amendments— enabling a wider variety of neighborhood-scale homes throughout Saint Paul— and the carefully-crafted technical details proposed by the Planning Department that will make that goal feasible, including:*

- A 33-foot height limit in Zoning Districts H1 and a 39-foot limit in H2*
- A 10-foot minimum front yard setbacks with thoughtful conditions regarding abutting lots*

*Carefully-calculated increases to the allowable lot coverage, with reasonable limits*

*I recommend only one change to the proposal: where the Planning Department recommends applying the Zoning District H2 within a 1/8-mile radius around Neighborhood Nodes and high-frequency transit routes, increase the catchment area to 1/4-mile. Doing so would be a modest change in keeping with the goals of Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan: to increase housing options within walking distance of neighborhood-oriented businesses and public transit. A quarter-mile is commonly considered the distance most people are willing to walk to a store or bus stop; it makes sense to legalize five homes per lot by right within that radius, instead of only four.*

*Thanks for your attention to my comments!*

*Sincerely,  
John Mark Gilbert  
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