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Dear Council Member Stark,

We wish to communicate our support for approval of the student-rental restrictions near UST and our concerns about the proposed 80-student housing development on Grand Avenue at Finn. As seven-year residents of the neighborhood, we have grown to accept the tradeoffs inherent in living close to a university. We are part of a wonderful community with great neighbors and older housing that has been nicely maintained. There are a number rental homes and duplexes on our street. Most are inhabited by St. Thomas students. A few present continual problems (noise, litter, vandalism, etc). We wish that wasn't the case, but understand that it comes with the territory.

What concerns us is the drift we've seen toward more and more student occupied housing. In this regard, we strongly support the student-rental limitations in Mac-Groveland and surrounding neighborhoods. With each owner-occupied conversion to student rental the chances of our neighborhood maintaining a balance between families, single professionals and students diminishes. Buyers are wary of moving into our neighborhood for fear that it will become a "Party Block." Current residents are anxious to leave for exactly the same reason. Unfortunately these responses produce exactly the result we fear--more rentals, lower property values, more noisy parties, more vandalism and more properties falling into disrepair. To those who claim that this is not a student-rental problem, but more broadly a rental problem, we beg to differ. Student rentals turn over faster. Residents are less likely to treat the rental with respect if they don't plan to stay there past a year or two. And, let's be honest, college students don't typically show the same respect to their neighbors that older and more mature renters do. In small numbers, student rentals are part of a balanced neighborhood, but when they dot streets in large numbers, the balance is lost. What might be the occasional loud party becomes streams of drunken students wandering from house to house several nights a week.

We have heard that the problems related to student rentals are issues for UST and the police. Believe us, we've used those resources. When polite requests to take the party inside at 2 am are ignored, we have called the police. What follows is that a police car shows up, the party quiets down for 10 or 20 minutes and then erupts anew. Reports to UST elicit no obvious response. And there are few things more frustrating than having Doug Hennes (Director of Neighborhood Relations at UST) remind us that "college students will be college students." Such trite tautology does nothing to help the situation.

We have also heard that limiting rentals near UST will only "push the problem to other neighborhoods." This argument makes no sense. Unless UST expands its student numbers, there is no need for new rentals. What we are seeing is a transition from a broad geographic distribution of rentals serving students to a much denser packing of

student rentals around the campus. Limiting rentals near UST won't force students out, it will only reduce the numbers moving in.

Lastly, we've been told that an ordinance limiting student rentals is unenforceable and potential unconstitutional. I'm not a lawyer and don't know the details, but it seems to me that limiting rentals is no different than any other zoning restriction. Identifying the renters as students is on par with limiting the number of unrelated residents in any other rental.

Please help us maintain balance in one of St Paul's great neighborhoods. Please vote yes to restrict new student rentals and lobby your fellow Council members to do the same.

A related issue also on the agenda of the June 20 Council meeting is the de-facto private dormitory project on the corner of Grand and Finn. Many aspects of this proposal are concerning. At five stories, it would be the largest structure in the neighborhood--larger than any of St. Thomas' street-front buildings (limited by agreement to four stories)--and the tallest building on Grand Avenue for several miles. It would tower over the two story houses around. And it completely ignores Planning Commission goals of establishing transitions of architectural style and dimension into residential neighborhoods.

The developer correctly states that the structure meets zoning restrictions and Planning Commission goals of higher-density housing on transit corridors. We can't argue that. But it seems to us that a three-story structure, like the five other apartment buildings less than a block away, offers sufficient density. We also wonder how important proximity to public transit is in this case. As you know, the developer is appealing Planning Commission limits on street-parking permits, asking that the development receive up to 120 permits. You can't fit 120 cars on the section of Grand between Cretin and Cleveland. So where will they go? Onto surrounding streets. We recognize that owning a house doesn't give you ownership of on-street parking spots, but we already see a steady stream of campus commuters parking on our street (most with permits purchased from friends living in the apartments on Grand). Adding 120 more permits would only exacerbate an already serious problem.

We don't wish to come across as NIMBYs. We moved into our house fully aware that St. Thomas was a block away, that Grand is mostly apartment buildings and that many students live nearby (including four in the rental next to us). But we love our house, our neighbors and the physical beauty of living close to the river. We have no plans of moving regardless of what happens with this particular development or any later ones. What we want is for the city to recognize that neighborhoods are not developed by developers. That simply abiding by zoning laws isn't always enough. That what makes St. Paul's many campuses attractive is that they are part of their communities. And that if the adjoining communities are allowed to become extensions of a campus, they won't be communities any longer. Allowing this development to move forth would send the message that Mac-Groveland is the new Dinkytown, that it's time to buy, demolish, and build. Who cares if each new development doubles the number of people living on the

block and more than doubles the number of cars without garages? Who cares if all sense of community is lost? We do. And we hope you do too.

We end this letter with a bit of irony. Each year or two when a new crop of students moves into the rental next to our house we have the opportunity to briefly chat with their parents. Almost to a one they have commented on what a nice neighborhood their child is moving into. They're right, but without Council help it won't stay that way. Please help us preserve the balance of housing; please vote to restrict student rentals and to substantially reduce the scale of the private dormitory proposal.

Sincerely Yours,

Justin, Kelly, Emma (age 9) and Silas (age 6)