

June 12, 2012

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COUNCILMEMBER
KATHY LAMRY

Dear City Council member:

The negative student behavior around the University of St. Thomas is not the main problem. It is a symptom and a distraction from the real issue of student housing, which only benefits the school and delays a responsible solution.

Our neighborhood has become the dormitories and parking lots for UST. The school is landlocked and yet is allowed to increase their student body each year which causes more disruption to the neighborhood. They do not have enough housing for the students and the neighborhoods have become the answer to their problem. While UST is a fine school, its unrestricted growth of its student body, additional degree programs and buildings have brought increased pollution, traffic, alcohol related problems, as well as increased pressure on city services such as police, firemen, and street maintenance. The school is not being "singled out", they have caused genuine problems and a solution needs to be found to protect the tax paying people residents from the assault on their neighborhood.

We believe change will only happen if the city acts decisively to preserve this once very nice middle class neighborhood from rapid deterioration. Our owner occupied housing stock is being converted to "rooming houses." There are good landlords and there are those that take advantage of the students and let the properties rundown so they make an even bigger profit. We have asked students at meetings whether their parents would like a student rental next to them and they sheepishly admitted that they would not. UST should build the housing plan on Summit that was approved and/or housing near University Avenue and the industrial area that could be serviced by their bus system or public transportation. So far, they have no incentive to solve their problem and our property values drop.

We support the ordinance being presented by Russ Stark but feel that it is just the beginning. The city needs to come up with an ordinance preventing single family/owner occupied homes from being converted into temporary housing. The profiteering by investors and the school's lack of social concern for the people they are affecting is not being challenged. The City of St. Paul needs to protect its citizens from the effects of speculators and the encroachment of a big, growing business with lots of influence. The residents do not have the advantage of financial resources, we look to our city officials for help.

We also ask that the plan for the apartment building at 2124 Grand not be approved. It is a specifically designed dormitory that if approved will pave the way for other developers to build this kind of housing on the streets surrounding the campus with destructive consequences for the residential neighborhood. Cleveland Avenue is already mostly student houses from Summit to Marshall and this kind of housing could easily be reproduced to assist UST with their housing problem.

Respectfully,

Patrick and Noreen Waters, 1898 Laurel Avenue

Merriam Park residents for 32 years – witnesses to the growing housing problem, groups of roving drunk students and noise, increased crime, party buses, new car damaged by students, and recently, the scary attempt by a UST drunk student who tried to enter our home in the middle of the night.