Student rental housing ordinance testimony
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My name is Mike Orth, and I am the president of the student body at the University of St. Thomas. I appreciate you reviewing this written testimony. Over the past two years, the student government at St. Thomas has made an unprecedented commitment toward improving relations with neighbors residing near university. In fact, it has been one of our very top initiatives and has been my top priority since becoming president.

We have hosted community meet-and-greets on campus so neighbors can meet our representatives, attended community dinners, and spoken at neighborhood community council meetings. We even started a community newsletter that highlights the work our student government and other organizations on campus are doing. It includes our contact information and helps us stay connected with the community.

I personally correspond with neighbors and meet with them on a regular basis. This is the best way to resolve issues, not approving an ordinance that likely will cause a greater rift between students and neighbors and make it harder for us to work together in the future. Student representatives at St. Thomas seek positive, constructive dialogue, not an ordinance that specifically targets our students.

On April 15, 2012, the Undergraduate Student Government at St. Thomas reviewed the proposed student rental house overlay district ordinance and came to the conclusion, after having discussed the matter with students on campus, that the ordinance represents bad policy. We unanimously passed a resolution against the ordinance, which I will submit to the City Council as part of my testimony.

St. Thomas students care about being good stewards of our neighborhood. We share in this community, too, and because of that we want neighbors to feel like their concerns are being addressed. The best way to resolve the issue is through dialogue and working together – not through this ordinance.

Thank you.