

From: [Catherine Spaeth](#)
To: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Opposition to proposal to increase family/household maximum
Date: Saturday, February 27, 2021 2:13:19 PM

Dear City Council,

I'm writing as a long-time resident of Merriam Park. I strongly oppose the proposal to increase the number of unrelated people living in a single dwelling in St. Paul. It's a bad idea.

I live in the St. Thomas neighborhood and, along with many of my neighbors, have worked for the past three decades to ensure landlords and renters obey the laws and behave in ways that allow all of us to live peaceably together. This has involved fighting against underage drinking, violation of noise ordinances, and other issues that come from living near groups of students. We lived next door to a group of 8 students in a duplex--students who hosted large and loud parties that went on late into the night, students who urinated in our yard, students who vomited out their upstairs windows in the middle of the night. We tried all manner of responses: talking to them, being respectful and polite when they first moved in, calling the police, taking the landlord to court. All of this involved only one duplex. There have been many, many other similar situations and many other neighbors who have been involved in trying to make it possible for homeowners and renters to live peaceably side by side.

And there have been many successes over the years, and they are a result of many hours of work by Merriam Park residents, volunteers who drove around the neighborhood at night in an effort to quell out-of-control parties and keep the rest of us safe, residents who volunteered on WSNAC to ensure St. Thomas is held to account for the hundreds of their students who live off campus, volunteers who worked with police and other neighbors, renters, and landlords. The list goes on.

I describe all of these efforts in order to say that our work over the past 3 decades will become all the more difficult, if not impossible, if you pass this change. Increasing the number of students in a dwelling by 50% is a slap in the face to those homeowners who have worked to keep the neighborhood livable and our property values intact.

I understand some of you value density over any other value. It certainly has a place, but this proposal will come at the expense of the community many of us in Merriam Park have tried to build. It has been a major disappointment to see the City Council, and in particular, my City Council member, care so little for the historic housing stock in Merriam Park, for the livability of the neighborhood, for the property values we have worked hard to protect, and for a community that values homeownership and the commitment to community that comes with it.

Four students per unit is a big enough group already for us to absorb. Increasing that number by 50% will turn more homes into rentals and encourage more developers to tear down existing houses to build more apartment buildings.

I urge you to vote against this proposal. It's a terrible idea.

Sincerely yours,
Catherine Spaeth
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St. Paul