

Kate Hebel
1301 Fairmount Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

TO: St. Paul City Council Members

Date: March 2, 2021

Re: Ord 21-4 Line Item 22, Second reading Amending the Zoning Code

I read the article in Feb. 17, 2021 Highland Villager that the City Council is holding a public hearing on the issue of redefining the term "family" in the City's zoning code. It piqued my interest. So in addition to the Villager's article I also read through many of the attachments to the Council's Agenda for tomorrow.

May I voice my concerns ...

1. I am all in favor of changing the definition that stands for "family". Since 1975 the term 'family' has changed significantly; we have multi-generational people living together; we have same sex marriages; and we have blended families. We also have people living together just to make ends meet. So I wholeheartedly support changing the definition.
2. What concerns me is increasing occupancy and the safety, specifically fire in residences. During this winter the metro has experienced several residential fires and trying to vacate residents is a huge life safety issue, especially children. Residences and duplexes are not required to have a sprinkler system.
3. I had a conversation with a city safety fire inspector and I was shocked to discover that residences are not required to have two exits; that's alarming and if that's the case for any residences with 6 adults and a number of children, and that exit is blocked by fire, how do they escape?

Reference: Minnesota 2020 Residential Code R311.2

4. When I read through the proposal I did not see any restrictions on the number of children under the age of 17 for six adults. That concerns me.
5. I also inquired if square footage per occupant would impact this proposal; however, I soon learned that a dwelling unit of 1200 sq.ft. could allow 11 residents; that seems overcrowded especially if they are asleep, with one exit. I realize there are windows in most bedrooms but two stories is quite a fall, and if a basement is annexed, without a legal egress, we have a lost soul. Reference: Appendix C included in Agenda.

I think we need to have the State and City Fire Marshall's weigh in on this proposal. Changing a definition to include increased occupancy could have a major safety issue for residents. We, the citizens of St. Paul, expect our leaders to seriously consider our lives and safety of such when writing rules.

I realize we need 'affordable housing' but not at the cost of life safety.