

**Ward 4 public comment taken for Ord 21-4:**

Hi Councilperson Jalali,

I am a homeowner near University of St. Thomas and while i am very much in favor of changing the definition of family for zoning purposes, i am very strongly **against including students** in this definition.

Student rentals have been a well known problem in this neighborhood for decades. UST has finally invested in building new dorms. It feels like things have started to turn around for the better in terms of UST/neighbor relations.

I also know that the Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations, Amy Gage, says UST is not lobbying for this change.

In an email to me she said "we are very concerned about student safety and already prevalent over occupancy. We want our students living in safe and legal housing."

Allowing 6 students packed into one house is not only a pain for the neighbors around them, for all the reasons you'd imagine, it's a safety and health hazard for the students.

Anyway, please consider voting against including the student housing provision in this expanded family definition.

Thank you so much!

Rlley Kane  
Fairmount Ave.

St Paul City Council,

Although I think it reasonable to explore the definition of family as it pertains to the current zoning code, I am opposed to the provision that will allow up to six students per property.

The quality of life in the community is my main concern.

I live next door to a property that is often a student rental property and the possibility of six students living in that house is frightening.

There are multiple student houses on our street and two student houses in back of us, on Marshall Avenue and there have been many police calls in the neighborhood over the years.

For this reason, I ask that the provision that would allow up to six students in a house be reconsidered.

Thank you-

Steven Horwitz

[2211 Dayton Ave](#)

[St Paul, MN 55104](#)

Keith Koch and Kristina Kliber  
2204 Dayton Avenue

We have lived in the Shadow Falls neighborhood of Merriam Park for over fourteen years. The current student housing overlay district is a critical tool to support a balanced community. The proposed zoning change to allow any 6 unrelated adults to live in a single-family home or a duplex will immediately destabilize the neighborhood.

On our side of the block (South-side of Dayton between Cretin/Exeter), there currently are two duplexes, and one single-family home student rental. The student overlay requirements have resulted in a nearly exact balance of students (currently at 20) to long-term residents (currently at 16). If the zoning change is allowed in the current student overlay district, there is the potential of 30 student renters on one side of the street alone, which tips the balance nearly 2 to 1.

There are key differences between student renters and other renters, which we also have on the block. The students typically move in at the end of August and move out at the end of May, leaving behind towers of garbage in the alley. Subletters fill the housing during the summer months, often using them as party pads. This leads to no sense of community or ownership due to the constant turnover.

The proposed zoning change does not address racial, social, or economic disparities in housing. Current absentee-owners of student housing will take this zoning change as a green light to charge additional rent without investing a dime in their properties or our community. It will not bring new folks and families of different backgrounds into the neighborhood.

It will only bring one group that for the last fourteen years has been a near-constant drain on the community that we call home. It will bring additional cars and traffic on an already packed street (even after using parking permit restrictions), additional garbage to already over-flowing garbage cans. It will bring additional nights of drunken screaming and public urination.

We are disappointed that the city is considering such a large change without study or data in the overlay district. The creation of the student overlay district took considerable time, analysis, and care in defining the area – with specific goals that resulted in a necessary balance of students/long-term residents for the compact geographic area. Before any changes within the student-overlay district, we would expect the same disciplined approach to study, data, and neighborhood and university involvement.

We urge you to maintain the current zoning limit of 4 unrelated adults in a housing unit in the student housing overlay district and oppose the increase to 'any 6' unrelated adults.

Thank you,  
Keith Koch and Kristina Kliber

Hi Mitra

I am writing to request your help to keep the current limits on student rental limits in our neighborhood. While we can get weary with the decades-long effort to keep the neighborhood a balanced, safe and growing community that is affordable to all, I believe the proposed changes to the student rental agreement are ill advised.

(see below)

My question has always been -What are examples of other neighborhoods faced with College/University proximity that have maintained affordable, mixed use, safe, liveable neighborhoods.

I actually have come to the conclusion that we have one of the most successful examples.

If affordable housing is the main concern I would ask that other solutions (City subsidized housing programs) be considered.

**No rationale to change current student renter limits:** As you can read in the attached Planning Commission study, there are some good arguments for making a broader change to the zoning code, with its outdated definition of "family." However, undergraduate college students who rent housing for 1-2 years are not the kind of nontraditional family unit that the study was meant to address, and there is arguably no good reason to apply the broader zoning change to student rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District.

The Student Housing Overlay District, an initiative of then councilman Russ Stark, was put into place in 2012 to stabilize housing stock in Merriam Park and Macalester Groveland. Many single-family homes around the University of St. Thomas were being converted to student rentals and there was real concern that a vibrant part of the city was slowly degrading into a Dinkytown environment, driving out long term renters and homeowners. We are grateful to the City for enacting this important zoning code provision, which remains an important tool we rely on to keep our neighborhood strong. Increasing the number of undergraduate students who can live together in a rental house from four to six will undermine that and other shared goals.

- **Safety:** As many of us know, it takes care and money to keep these old houses in MacGroveland and Merriam Park in good shape. For that reason, it probably comes as no surprise that the student rentals in our neighborhood tend to be among the least well-maintained houses. That *can* translate to serious safety concerns for the students who live there, starting with a failure to properly install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and sometimes with behavior that puts tenants at risk. Fortunately, no students have died in a student rental house fire since the tragic death of a UST sophomore in December 2010, which was thought to be caused by improperly disposed smoking materials. But just last weekend, an electrical fire broke out in a UST student rental because of space heaters. There were no injuries in this daytime fire, but the students and their families were shaken by the close call.

- **Neighborhood livability:** For folks living on blocks with many rental houses, the increase of two students per house would represent a nearly immediate 50% increase in residents, cars and in many instances, parties. One homeowner estimates this change would result an increase in 24 students on his block. That is a lot more students coming and going up and down the street at 2:00 a.m.

- **Affordability:** We have all read in recent years about the City's goals to increase housing density along transit corridors and also to improve the availability of affordable housing stock.

But increasing the numbers of students living in rental houses in the neighborhood does not serve that goal. Does anyone really believe that rents will remain the same when a landlord can collect rent from six students instead of four?

WSNAC (the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee) became aware of the Planning Commission's study and proposal in late January (well after the Planning Commission had taken public testimony). WSNAC voted at its February 9th meeting to oppose the proposed zoning code change. The majority of WSNAC voting members believe there is no rationale and no data to support the Planning Commission's decision to specifically include the Student Rental Overlay District in the change. In fact, the Planning Commission cited lack of data as one limitation to the study (p. 6). With many current realities impacting housing patterns in and around UST (construction of a new dorm, the new sophomores on campus housing requirement, recent and seemingly continuing construction of numerous private dorms, plus the COVID-19 pandemic-related effects of more couples and families seeking to buy or rent houses and fewer students currently renting in the neighborhood), there are housing data and patterns we would like to better understand before a change of this magnitude is hammered down on the near UST area.

Dear Members of the St. Paul City Council.

I have lived in my home at 1936 Selby Avenue for 27 years. Along with many others in my neighborhood, I worked very hard to have the last student housing ordinance passed which stipulates that only four unrelated people can share a rental residence and that rental properties have to be a mandated distance apart from each other. The reason that this was - and still is - of paramount importance is because it has kept our community - which was on the tipping point of becoming the next Dinkytown - in balance.

Prior to that, it felt like we were living in the Wild West, with the "luxury" of paying taxes to do so. All the while, we were being subjected, on a regular basis, to the debris of living near a college campus and the all-night wanderings from one rental "party house" to the next. FOR YEARS we endured loud parties, loud music, drunken fights, having our lawn vomited and urinated on, a regular stream of red solo cup and food garbage being left on our boulevard and in our street, loud, foul language at all hours of the night, college students passing out in the yards of our neighborhood, flags and political signs being stolen and even, the stealing of children's' toys from front yards and porches.

After the last ordinance was passed, a wealthy parent from a Minneapolis suburb purchased the house next door to us for his daughter – a then-college-freshman at the University of St. Thomas. To get around the ordinance, he transferred the house ownership to his daughter and she proceeded to house 3-4 of her UST besties for the next 5 years. It was a nightmare beyond description and many calls to the St. Paul Police Department and the University of St. Thomas resulted only in momentary pauses in the disturbances. Our every-day reality became a waiting game until this neighbor was graduated and sold the house.

In the last few years we have witnessed the construction of apartment buildings on Marshall and Moore, Grand and Cleveland, Grand and Finn and now Marshall and Finn along with two properties at Snelling and Selby. UST has finally built more student housing and will require students to live on campus for the first two years of attendance. In light of this, changing the student housing ordinance to accommodate for even more occupants - a proposal of a 50% increase in density - seems unnecessary and frankly, ridiculous. We still have a rental property on our block that is a physical eyesore and requires the regular oversight of the University of St. Thomas to make sure that the number of student occupants remains at four and that they are held accountable for their behavior. Before UST became involved, there were often more than four occupants and the parties and bad behavior were routine. This once-beautiful home, which was a jewel in our neighborhood, is now a run-down, dirty and ill-kept slum house owned by a man in North Dakota who cares nothing for the community in which he owns property.

At some point, home owners must matter. We pay dearly in taxes to live in a neighborhood and city we love, invest in the beautification of our homes and properties and help grow life and community here. WE DESERVE TO MATTER! We're here for the long-run and not just for a couple of passing years. This is how St. Paul will remain vibrant and viable and a desirable place for people to live.

I'm pleading with you, to keep the student housing ordinance intact in its current form in order to maintain the balance that was needed and is working for everyone.

Sincerely,

Missy McDonald and Michael McDonald  
1936 Selby Avenue  
Saint Paul  
651-399-1469



St. Paul City Council Members - As a life long citizen of St Paul, I am contacting you about the proposed changes to the single dwelling zoning ordinance and the corresponding increase in adult occupants.

During the past 2 weeks I have canvassed my neighborhood about the proposed zoning change. Everyone I talked with is 100% in agreement with the need for the changes and the proposed language.

However, everyone (including St Thomas students who live in these homes) asks that you consider how these changes will impact those of us living in the unique Student Housing Impact District. We ask you to support the recent resolution of WSNAC that would exempt the Student Zone from this proposal.

Student housing has nothing to do with the changing dynamics of the family.

A 50 percent increase in the number of students in our neighborhood will be devastating.

We love living in the student community but have had our share of horrible experiences with students over the last 20 years....all night parties, urination and littering on our lawn, over-crowded houses, increased car traffic, refusal to wear masks ,etc. I'm sure you have heard all of this before.

Students have been subject to over-crowding by their landlords causing very serious safety issues.

We ask you to please exempt the Student Housing Impact District from the zoning changes.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I look forward to your response.

Thank you so much,

Rick Nelson

Councilmember Tolbert:

I write in opposition to changing the Student Overlay District around the University of St. Thomas. For years, this initiative has produced less strain on residential streets for parking, a reduction in noisy (“problem”) houses and has created a safer environment for our student neighbors.

What it hasn’t curbed is an insatiable appetite for investors and developers to buy up single-family homes to rent by the bedroom to students at monthly rents approaching \$3,500 - \$4,000 per month. I suspect these inflated prices are part of the reason you are considering increasing occupancy to make these costs more “affordable”.

I am concerned at the number of homestead properties versus non-homestead around UST. When we bought our house on Dayton Avenue eighteen years ago studies indicated that the non-homestead rate in the neighborhood was at 24%. Now it has more than doubled. Studies conducted around universities in Milwaukee and in Georgia suggest that “an increase to over 30% non-homesteads would generally be considered a “tipping point” for a single-family residential neighborhood that could lead to disinvestments and decline”. Our neighborhood is beyond that point. While it’s obvious why investors and developers want to buy homes to rent to students as there are enormous profits to be gained, we allow this at the peril of losing a significant part of any neighborhood – the owner-occupied single family home. Home ownership continues to be the number one way to build personal wealth.

I’m young enough to remember a Dinky Town that looked far different than it does today. It used to be a neighborhood where you could still find homes, schools, and family neighborhoods close to the U of MN campus. Now, it is all U of MN buildings and high rises with a few homes badly maintained being rented to students. We do not want this neighborhood to see the type of development and disinvestment we see currently around the University of MN.

Now, with St. Thomas announcing their intent to increase freshmen enrollment by 25% by 2025, it’s critical that the student overlay district remain intact – for their safety and to sustain a balanced neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Daniel Taylor

February 25, 2021

Re: Zoning occupancy change to 6 people

Dear Councilwoman Jalali,

Thank you for your service to the people of St. Paul. I would like to address the proposed occupancy change which includes unrelated individuals such as students and other groups including group homes residences.

We have lived in St. Paul since 1974. We have lived through many changes from at home moms and larger families, family homes sold for student rentals etc. Since we live in a college area, we know all the negative impacts from groups of students living in family homes. We have attended endless neighborhood meetings and meetings with many city councils, and our neighborhood has benefited from the current zoning with the additional space required between student rentals. For many years we struggled with whether to leave St. Paul as many of our neighbors did. We questioned how much to invest in improvements in a home in St. Paul. The last few years with the change in distance between student rentals, we are seeing homes returning to family occupancy. This has been a wonderful change and we thank all who supported it.

If occupancy is increased for students, this will be lost again. More crowding in the homes, more people to party, more cars on the streets with many only 40 foot lots. The liveability of St. Paul near colleges will go backwards. It appears there is no reason to include student residence increases in this zoning change. This proposal is not good for every situation.

We would also like to comment on the impact this could have on other communal living groups. Group homes for individuals with disabilities now have 4 people plus staff in traditional family homes. We know from personal experience this number works in these homes. There is no reason for this zoning issue to involve homes for special needs that are complex and monitored by other agencies. Again this proposal is not good for every situation and needs to limit its scope.

Therefore we are asking you to oppose any part of this zoning change that which

would affect groups of individuals such as students and group homes for disabled individuals. We have personal experience with each of these and they should not be grouped into this zoning change. Thank you.

Loretta and Jim Nuessle

Dear Council member Jalali,

I write in opposition to the proposal to allow six unrelated persons to occupy a dwelling unit in proximity to the University of Saint Thomas. If approved, this will threaten recent positive changes to our fraught town-gown relationship and will be a detriment to my neighborhood.

I have some background with the issue, having been a member and president of the Macalester Groveland Community Council and member of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee. The problem of UST student rentals took up much of my time in both positions. I attach a report, written with UST's Doug Hennes, which outlined the problems. Thankfully, some of them have been resolved by the on-campus requirement at UST.

In fact, Saint Paul and UST made real progress in these and subsequent years. After passage of the 150' student rental spacing requirement, the attendant overlay district and UST's on-campus requirement, I thought we were approaching stability, if not resolution, of a frustrating problem.

It was therefore astounding to me to hear of the proposal to increase allowed "unrelateds" per household by 50%, to six each. Within the Student Housing Neighborhood Impact Overlay District, this would be a huge mistake. This is because the dynamics within the Overlay District differ from those elsewhere in the city.

Within the Overlay District, there is a delicate balance between single-family households and student rentals. Because the effects are not life-threatening, it is difficult to convey the debilitating frustration of living in proximity to some student rentals. This is not just aesthetics nor a snobby NIMBY attitude. It is real feelings of security, peacefulness and confidence in the future of one's household. The proposal, if allowed, will encourage the growth of student rentals and erase our recent progress.

I understand the value of increasing density across the City and do not expect to reverse the trend toward rentals. I am saying that we must manage such trends in a sensitive and responsive manner. The Student Housing Neighborhood Impact Overlay District exists for a reason and the reason is that its neighborhoods are subject to special strains. Our ordinances, if they are to have general value, must respect such local conditions.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Saint Paul.

Joel Clemmer

Greetings. I ask that the City make no changes to the current Student Rental Ordinance, which is working very well in promoting a variety of housing options in the neighborhoods around the University of Saint Thomas. This ordinance is not anti-student; it is about keeping rein on out-of-town developers who purchase houses and then overload them with students. The most important part of the ordinance is the requirement that there be spacing between student rental properties: this spacing requirement is really no different than a setback requirement or a limitation on Floor Area Ratios. The goal is to create neighborhoods with a diversity of housing options: some single family houses in a block will be open to students and some will be home to families with children. The current limit of no more than four students in a single house has positive features in that it prevents unsafe over-occupancy and helps to reduce the number of vehicles on the street. The existing ordinance is working: it supports and fosters a cooperative and diverse neighborhood that provides for a range of housing options while preventing an overload of student rentals in a block, which might tend to make the neighborhood less attractive to families with children.

Marc Manderscheid

Hello Council Member:

I have been a resident of St Paul for seventeen years, have three school aged children and have lived in two different areas of St Paul (Lincoln Ave and Portland Ave) with a high density of University of St Thomas students. I find the student rental ordinance that was instituted by former council member, Russ Stark, to be a life-line to the neighborhood. Undergraduate college students who rent housing for 1-2 years are not the kind of nontraditional family unit that the study was meant to address, and there is arguably no-good reason to apply the broader zoning change to student rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District.

The livability of our neighborhood is already questionable. We have two rentals and one student-owned rental on our short block. We hear late-night parties and day-time parties with obscene language being used while our children are playing outside. We have parking and trash issues. The homes with students are not as well kept as owner occupied homes (sidewalks are not cleared of snow, there is minimal landscaping and upkeep issues). Students have a transient nature and are not interested in becoming a part of our neighborhood. We have invited the students to join us for National Night Out and neighborhood gatherings with students declining to attend.

My family needs and wants community in our neighborhood. Adding additional students further takes away from the livability of our neighborhood and removes the safety net put in place in 2012. Had I known before we moved to Portland Ave that students would be allowed to increase in our neighborhood, I would have moved to the suburbs long ago. Please help to keep this neighborhood from having to deal with more of the above problems.

Sincerely,  
Christine Johnson

It's about balance. Balance in the neighborhoods. Today, on our block, we have houses occupied by senior citizens, recent empty-nesters, families with children, houses with students, and one house with students that have graduated UST and chosen to stay in the neighborhood. It's a vibrant and diverse block.

I remember when the student overlay district ordinance was passed. Prior to that, neighborhood sentiment was justifiably quite high against the conversion of single-family homes into student rental units due to the negative impact on the neighborhood observed over the previous ten years. This necessary ordinance seemed to slow the conversion of single-family homes to student occupied houses within our extended neighborhood. Recently, extensive on-campus dormitories have been constructed, and also numerous new apartment buildings around the periphery of campus (Grand Ave, Marshall Ave, etc) catering to students.

It is our feeling that the additional on-campus capacity and new apartment builds around campus have alleviated the need for increasing student housing density by 50% (by increasing the allowable number of tenants from four to six). This suggests that the only beneficiaries of this change to the overlay district would be remote landlords who might realize a 50% increase in rent per house, creating a favorable condition to convert more single-family homes to student housing that would destroy the balance that we all enjoy today.

**Michael P. McDonald**



Dear Ms. Jalali,

Please have my comments read into the public hearing record for the March 3 hearing regarding household definition. I'm writing to support limits of occupancy in student dwellings in the SH overlay district to a maximum of four students

We don't have student tenants, and it happens that the cap on the number of houses in our vicinity has been reached, That has not stopped us from finding a DIY crack pipe in our garden, numerous times finding cans and bottles pitched over our fence, and one Homecoming episode. In this episode, four coeds are stumbling down the walk in post-game "humor," carrying drinks and doing what I know I did in terms of laughter and volume (in NYC, and no one noticed). As a young woman doubled over nearly falling on our lawn, a car pulled up, all of her friends jumped in the car. She lagged a bit, polished off her drink and dropped the cup on our lawn. She didn't know my husband saw the whole thing. He shouted, "STOP! Yeah, YOU, blondie. It's bad enough that you nearly pass out on my lawn, but get over here and pick up the cup."

In our day we have lived next door to students. We always made a point of going over for the "introduction and interview." Our advice to them was, if you plan to have a party, invite **all** of the neighbors. This gives them notice that the people around them are watching, and lessens the surprise if you show up--for a drink, or to complain or both. I do not support the plan of six renters per unit in student housing.

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Susan S. Widmar, MBA

Dear City Council Member Nelson

As a 36 year resident of the Mac/Groveland neighborhood I am writing to you to oppose the Planning Commission's proposed zoning code changes on March 3, 2021.

I am appalled at the total lack of transparency there has been on this issue and the total disregard you have shown to the neighbors who have been working together for 40 years to bring about a working relationship between the Neighbors, University of St Thomas and Renters. Congratulations on uniting the Pro and Against University of St Thomas neighbors against you;

- Neighbors: your proposal would undo all of the work and efforts put forth by the different groups that have been addressing the rental issues
- Univ of St Thomas: They just completed building two new state of the art dorm building and are doing everything possible to keep students on campus, your proposal undermines everything they have done
- Developers: New student off campus apartment buildings (think Gand & Finn) have been built to be in alignment with the city study that was done. Your proposal undermines what they have done and devalues their properties

My personal objections include;

- Given the significant property taxes i pay every year and continue to go up I should have a say in proposals that affect my property value and quality of life
- I have not heard from any neighbors that the zoning codes need to be changed in regards to how many unrelated people can live in a house. Our elected officials are suppose to listen to their constituents
- Safety: I see no where where you consulted with the area colleges to get their input on the proposed changes and how it would impact the safety of their students

I ask that you please vote NO on the zoning code changes

- **KSTP-TV featured Tommie East:** <https://kstp.com/news/i-know-im-making-a-difference-here-university-of-st-thomas-builds-a-residence-hall-where-sustainability-is-key-february-19-2021/6018579/?cat=1>

Thank you

**Tim Plunkett**

Dear Ms. Jalali,

We live in Ward 4 near the University of St. Thomas. We have owned two homes in this neighborhood for the past 47 years. We both graduated from St. Thomas and are grateful for our education. I practiced law and my husband is a remodeling contractor. We know the neighborhood well. My husband remodels homes to be used by families. We have years of experience where students living in houses in Merriam Park and MacGroveland. We would never rent or sell to students - who mostly want a party house.

We are pleased that St. Thomas has tried to house students on campus by providing more dorms. Nonetheless, a large number of students prefer the freedom of living in houses in the neighborhood - the overriding reason is the freedom to have parties. (Practice is: Study in study halls, party in the house!) The more students who live in a house the more friends are invited to party as well.

As neighbors and remodelers, we have experienced the serious consequences of allowing a number of students in one house. We have seen inside such homes when my husband looks for a home to remodel. A horror story of damage and neglect. A house is not good stock after students have used it.

**Allowing 4 non-related persons** in a house is already very reasonable. And those would no doubt be students. Six is ridiculous. We understand the city's desire for density and affordable housing. **But that should be for legitimate low-or-medium income families who would most likely be related persons who want a permanent home- not students. Students can find on-campus housing.**

If you want a good property tax base in this area and attract families, don't make it easy for students (who at college age are not usually adequately mature) to use the housing stock as a place to trash for their pleasure. Students graduate and mostly move on. Student parties create more work for the police department. Student-used houses become eye-sores and damaged property.

Please do not pass any ordinance which, in effect, will allow more students in a house or that allows for more student rental houses in a neighborhood than already allowed.

Janet Wilebski and Alan Wilebski

Dear Council member Jalali,

I write in opposition to the proposal to allow six unrelated persons to occupy a dwelling unit in proximity to the University of Saint Thomas. If approved, this will threaten recent positive changes to our fraught town-gown relationship and will be a detriment to my neighborhood.

Too many students together create bad situations. Last year six students were illegally living at the corner of Finn and Fairmount - they put up a thin blue line flag and in drunken fits smashed glass bottles in the street. St. Thomas defended them as nice kids who were not racist, but support police. What got rid of them? They had too many people in the house and were kicked out for breaking code. The house was sold and a black family moved in. A happy ending.

I dont want large groups of students backed by a conservative school (with serious problems dealing with race) living by my kids.

Within the Overlay District, there is a delicate balance between single-family households and student rentals. Because the effects are not life-threatening, it is difficult to convey the debilitating frustration of living in proximity to some student rentals. This is not just aesthetics nor a snobby NIMBY attitude. It is real feelings of security, peacefulness and confidence in the future of one's household. The proposal, if allowed, will encourage the growth of student rentals and erase our recent progress.

I understand the value of increasing density across the City and do not expect to reverse the trend toward rentals. But I dont want this used to allow St. Thomas students to take over neighborhoods.

Thank you,  
Anna Henderson

Hi Mitra,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposed occupancy zoning change that will allow up to 6 college students to share a housing unit. I understand the need for additional affordable housing opportunities in the city and accept that change to address the need is required. I don't understand how permitting expanded dwelling density for college students can be part of the solution.

The Student Housing Overlay District is an important policy protecting my neighborhood from becoming consumed by student rentals. Nonetheless, student rentals and the related issues in the neighborhood certainly haven't gone away. Each new school year brings 'educating' new groups of kids on our block or the block behind on being responsible members of a neighborhood. Some years that feels like a losing battle. Expanding the permitted density of student housing will tip the delicate balance of student housing and family homes into a student dominated neighborhood I don't believe I can be a part of.

I urge you to maintain the provisions in the Student Housing Overlay District that took effect August 8 2012 in any consideration of dwelling occupancy changes.

regards,  
Walter Ebertz

Dear Councilmember Jalali,

I have been a resident of Merriam Park for over 30 years. In 2011 your predecessor, Russ Stark, crafted the resolution that would create the Student Housing Overlay District in Ward 4. It was the result of a lack of student housing at the University of St. Thomas campus and of the university administration prioritizing other buildings — an athletics and fitness center, a sprawling student center — over residence halls to house its growing student body. The overlay was intended to regulate the sprawling of student rentals, which typically are ill kept and may present safety challenges, and to help student renters live in a community with a diversity of housing types.

Under the leadership of Dr. Julie Sullivan, the university opened two new residence halls in fall 2020, along with enacting a residency requirement for both first-year students and sophomores. The impact on the rental market will not be fully understood until the residency requirement is fully enacted, in fall 2022, and the pandemic is under control enough that life can return to a new normal.

Large clusters of rentals specific to this population — as well as the six-person occupancy that the Planning Commission's change to the Definition of Family ordinance would allow — are concerning from a safety point of view. In 2004, three students died in a Dinkytown house fire. In 2011, in our own backyard, one student died in a fire, and on Valentine's Day of this year, a four-fire-truck alarm was the result of a poorly maintained furnace in an owner-occupied duplex, which resulted in a loss of heat during the cold snap. The landlord provided space heaters, which caused an electrical fire in the attic. That unit was occupied by four UST students who were able to get out in time because the fire occurred in mid-morning. It was a matter of minutes, according to the fire chief, before the house was to be engulfed in flames. I shudder to think what would have happened if such an incident had taken place in the middle of the night.

These are not the complaints of a homeowner who is concerned about parking and late-night noise. As a past board member of Union Park District Council and current co-chair of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee, I am an involved citizen who lives among St. Thomas students and who welcomes and befriends them as my neighbors.

Instead, I write to you today as a concerned mother and constituent. The Planning Commission's proposed change to six-person occupancy within the Student Housing Overlay District will put students — who already over-occupy those properties — at risk.

Consider these facts:

- In 2005, three students died in a house fire near Miami University in Ohio.
- In 2014, one Boston College student died in a house fire, and the list goes on.
- According to FEMA, during the last 16 academic years from 2000 through 2015, there have been 85 fatal fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities and off-campus housing, resulting in 118 fatalities — an average of approximately seven per school year. An astonishing 94 percent of fatal campus fires examined took place in off-campus housing.
- In total 110 young lives were lost nationwide because of overcrowding and unregulated student rentals.

How many must die before the cities, the universities, the landlords and the student renters themselves will take notice of safety challenges brought about by overcrowding and poorly maintained and regulated structures? Most recently, student renters of a duplex on Marshall Avenue complained in a

UPDC meeting that repairs were needed to have a functional kitchen, but the landlord had failed to respond to several requests. This is not an out-of-state landlord, but lack of enforcement from the Department of Safety and Inspections allows him to do as he pleases, and with a certificate of occupancy he can go on with impunity.

At our February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 WSNAC meeting, Ward 4 legislative aide Matt Privratsky was asked if the city had considered the impact of the Definition of Family change on the Student Housing Overlay District. In response to our concerns that additional renters per unit could create a safety challenge, he said that rentals would be regulated through DSI to address that very issue. Unfortunately, that process has been unreliable and inconsistent to date. He further indicated that the impact on the overlay had not been considered beyond creating additional rental opportunities.

As an engaged citizen who devotes a lot of volunteer hours to neighborhood improvement, I am concerned about the city's lack of engagement with either Union Park or Macalester-Groveland district council on this issue. I am concerned that over-occupancy remains a challenge. A colleague's residence, a so-called alley house on Fairview, is surrounded by four student rentals that were grandfathered in when the city implemented the overlay in August 2012. His block alone has 40 students. Increasing the number of residents to each of these structures would bring the count to over 60. Furthermore, increasing the number of occupants per structure in the student overlay will not reduce rent, but only give landlords a blank check to increase their revenue while continuing business as usual.

We at WSNAC fully support re-defining the zoning code to recognize different definitions of "family." The St. Paul population has shifted over several decades, and the current definition no longer fits in our society. But we had understood that at this juncture in time the student overlay would be left as is. While we recognize that this may not be a long-term solution, we are asking the City Council to refrain from upping the occupancy limit in student rentals within the overlay until data are available reflecting the impact of the residency requirement, combined with parent-owned housing, and until community engagement and an impact study can be undertaken in collaboration with both District Councils.

Finally, I live next to a registered student house. I make a point to connect to and welcome the student residents and help them understand that with living in the community comes responsibilities. I welcome their asking for help since, for many, it is their first time living on their own away from parental oversight. I cannot imagine not having them as neighbors, but the prospect of an increase of 50 percent in the student occupancy rate is reason enough to pause and be concerned of the impact that would result on the safety of all in the overlay district.

For now, until we can analyze the new realities, please allow the Student Housing Overlay District to be exempt from the new occupancy standards. Allow it to fulfill its function — namely, to ensure that a neighborhood on the edge of the state's largest private college or university provides a balance of housing types for non-student neighbors and a safe, sustainable neighborhood for the student residents.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Noelle Jacquet-Morrison

Dear Council Member Jalali:

We support the Council's action to correct the use of the word "family" in the legislative code.

As suggested, this "definition limits households that don't closely conform to the "nuclear family" of two parents and their linearly-related children." We agree the definition can be applied in a way that is discriminatory or arbitrary to households that don't fit the historic definition of the "nuclear family" and other households that may have unique housing needs. We have lived in the Merriam Park neighborhood for over 30 years. Once we did fit the definition of the nuclear family, but now our children are grown and live on their own.

However, we do not agree with the planning commission's recommendation to amend Section 702 of Article 67 by deleting the number "four (4)" and replacing it with the word "more". We support the earlier recommendation to amend Section 703 by adding a new number "(1) A student dwelling shall be occupied by no more than four students."

Having lived in a neighborhood on the edge of the University of St. Thomas campus for as long as we have, we have witnessed the expansion of the school and the pressure that expansion put on the surrounding neighborhood. We have worked with the City, the University Administration and the neighborhood to balance the interest of all.

The creation of the Overlay Districts was a creative way to recognize the need for a mix of ownership groups within the neighborhood without overwhelming it with student rentals. The enforcement of the current limit on the number of student occupants has been a challenge as there is an incentive to over occupy properties to lower the per student cost. But the limit does act as a brake on excessive occupancy. Removing it will encourage landlords to raise rents and for student renters to maximize occupancy.

**We request that the four-student limit be preserved.**

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard and Mary Pat Nadeau  
1994 Portland Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55104



Councilmember Nelson,

I'm writing to express that I strongly oppose removing the Student Overlay District around the University of St. Thomas and increasing non-related adults living in homes to 6 people. The overlay district has been very successful in maintaining a balance of student rentals and owner-occupied homes which has resulted in a diverse and welcoming neighborhood for students, families with young children, and retirees alike, which is why I chose to move to the neighborhood 17 years ago.

In addition to several new apartment developments going up on Marshall which are specifically intended for students, removing the Student Overlay District will quickly shift the neighborhood makeup, which is already beyond a tipping point, to a neighborhood of mainly student rentals. I am already aware of neighbors who are questioning whether to make improvements to their homes and are considering leaving the neighborhood. While I love my home, living in a neighborhood predominantly made up of student rentals which will increase foot/car traffic, house parties, homes in disrepair is not at all appealing and I will likely sell. Do you really want the neighborhoods surrounding St. Thomas to look like the neighborhoods surrounding the Minneapolis campus of the U of M?

I urge you to keep the Overlay District and keep the maximum number of non-related adults to 4 per home around the University of St. Thomas.

Kind regards,

Kelly Vinson-Taylor

Good afternoon,

I am writing today to express our general support of proposed changes to the number of persons that may live in a household. We are, however, concerned about how these changes will affect rental homes in the Student Overlay District. We encourage this District to be excluded from the current proposed changes, as outlined by the resolution proposed by the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

Thank you,

Jessica DeRosier

Dear Council Member Jalali and City Council Members,

I'm writing as a long-time resident of Merriam Park and Ward 4. 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

Hello,

I am a 33 year resident of St. Paul living at 1886 Portland Avenue, 4 blocks due East of the University of St. Thomas.

There is a 2 (possibly 3?) unit Duplex directly across the street from my home. The addresses of this duplex are 1885-1887 Portland Avenue.

With 4 **[or possibly 5?]** college students occupying this building [almost year round], I can report many, many times being woken up by loud parties and drunken students yelling and hollering out on the street in the early morning hours (11:30 - 1:30) any given day of the week. On one occasion, I witnessed a fistfight in my neighbor's front yard! I have made numerous calls to the Police non-emergency number about late-night parties and loud cars. At one point, the [current] student residents of this house were summoned to the St. Paul Police Department for a meeting to discuss their disruptive behavior towards the neighborhood. I attended that meeting.

Up to four students living in this one house have been a lot of trouble over the past 30+ years. Increasing the capacity to 6 unrelated people in the same building would be a major disruption to the peace and quiet of our neighborhood!

Please do NOT allow the capacity of these rental housing units to increase to 6! The local Colleges and Universities can not control the behavior of their students who live off campus to any great degree. It should not be the responsibility of those of us who LIVE here to assume that responsibility. We have even LESS control over these students.

**I pay \$9,000.00 a year in Property Taxes!!** I **EXPECT** to be able to live in a quiet, safe neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin J. Sweeney

Dear Council member Jalali,

I understand that changing the city zoning code definition of "family" would remove the housing barriers for nontraditional families and I'm all for that.

What I am concerned about is if this change would allow student renter limits to increase from four to six students. I don't think student households should fall under the same category as nontraditional families. I see student households as unofficial sorority/fraternity houses with unfortunately all the negative baggage that comes with them.

Landlords would be more likely to rent to students because they can make more money than they would if renting to a nontraditional family.

Susy Gilbert

Thank you. I've talked to most of the neighbors on my block and several others in my area. Everyone - including the students - agree that applying these zoning changes in the student overlay district will be really bad. We will turn into another Dinkytown.

I have seen the terrible way that landlords treat the St Thomas students.

During the last cold snap, the pipes froze in the rental house across the street. Pipes, hot water heater, boiler all had to be replaced. Last year the ceiling in one of the bedrooms fell down because the roof leaked for so long. I have been in other student homes that are barely livable. These landlords will cram 2 additional renters in a snap if they are allowed to.

We have many small children on our block. Already they must be careful when playing outside because of all the car traffic (not to mention being kept awake all night by partying). The danger will increase if 50 percent more students are allowed on our block.

I am 70 years old and disabled. I already have difficulty parking in front of my house. Again, increasing traffic by 50 percent will make it much more difficult and dangerous for me.

My neighbors all agree that implementing these changes will have a huge negative impact in the student overlay district and ask that the City Council exempt the overlay district.

Thank you.

Rick Nelson

Dear Council member Jalali,

I understand that you're about to vote on a proposal to change the zoning code in a manner that will ultimately allow up to six students to live in a student rental dwelling.

I'm very much in favor of improving housing opportunities for non-traditional households. But this change would also allow landlords to squeeze more students into student housing. The Student Housing Overlay District has been a wonderful thing for our neighborhood, and this change would weaken it.

Landlords could make more money renting to six individual students than they would if renting to a nontraditional family, so in student housing areas, the change wouldn't have the hoped-for effect, and would in fact lower the quality of life, and the desirability of owning a home in the neighborhood.

Which brings up a larger point, one that this specific proposal can't fully cover, but it's worth stating: I hope that all your decisions encourage home ownership for households of all sorts, rather than rental housing.

Unless you've lived next to a St. Thomas party house, or several of those, you can't fully appreciate what a one-issue voter it can make of you. Please don't create a step backward for our neighborhood.

Chris Parker



February 28, 2021

Council Member Mitra Jalali 310-D City Hall  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West Saint Paul, MN 55102

Re: Definition of Family Study

Dear Council Member Jalali:

I support the Council's action to correct the use of the word "family" in the legislative code.

As suggested, this "definition limits households that don't closely conform to the "nuclear family" of two parents and their linearly-related children." I agree the definition can be applied in a way that is discriminatory or arbitrary to households that don't fit the historic definition of the "nuclear family" and other households that may have unique housing needs.

I have lived in the Merriam Park neighborhood for over 35 years and understand the need for a variety of rental options for people who have diverse needs.

However, I do not agree with the planning commission's recommendation to amend Section 702 of Article 67 by deleting the number "four (4)" and replacing it with the word "more". I support the earlier recommendation to amend Section 703 by adding a new number "(1) A student dwelling shall be occupied by no more than four students."

Having lived in a neighborhood on the edge of the University of St. Thomas campus for as long as I have, I have witnessed the expansion of the school and the pressure that expansion put on the surrounding neighborhood. I have worked with the University Administration and the neighborhood to balance the interest of all.

The creation of the Overlay Districts was a creative way to recognize the need for a mix of ownership groups within the neighborhood without overwhelming it with student rentals. The enforcement of the current limit on the number of student occupants has been a challenge as there is an incentive to over occupy properties to lower the per student cost. But the limit does act as a brake on excessive occupancy. Removing it will encourage landlords to raise rents and for student renters to maximize occupancy.

I request that the four-student limit be preserved.

Fran Mountain

Members of the City Council,

I am writing to express my concerns and opposition to Ordinance 21-4: Amending the zoning code as recommended in the Definition of Family Zoning Study.

I am not opposed to redefining the definition of family to be more inclusive and to accommodate multi-generational families. However, I am gravely opposed to increasing the number of unrelated persons living in one household.

It is a well known fact that unaffordable rental rates encourage illegal occupancy, and often times people are living in basements without adequate egress and in second and third floor bedrooms with unsafe conditions and inadequate egress. I have witnessed this firsthand in my neighborhood. The neighborhood liaison from the University of St. Thomas, Amy Gage, described this very real problem at the Macalester Groveland Housing and Land Use meeting on Monday, March 1, 2021. According to Ms. Gage, students have confided that illegal occupancy among St. Thomas students is the best kept secret.

It appears that there is already an inadequate process for enforcing the current occupancy and safety thresholds. Increasing the legal number of occupants will exacerbate a problem that is already poorly managed and dangerous. I urge council members to reject the increase in occupancy.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn McGuire

Hi I wanted to leave a message and hopefully I can. I just wanted to find out when the city Council's decision about the increase in limits to student housing, number of individuals that student housing unit was going to take place. I wanted to let what Jalali know that I'm completely against that decision on the moratorium and I say this as a resident of the Ward I'm also as a landlord too in college students. My husband and my own college rentals, student rentals, and we abide by all the rules set up and we think that it's a good idea to keep them at this level. We live amongst college houses that are not ones that we own in there. We absolutely take care of all of our houses and make sure students do rent to are really respectable. The neighbors restructure the neighbors. We work closely with Amy Gage at Saint Thomas. Can we live next to college rentals that are not? I wouldn't put him in that category there. Very, loud, noisy insect in one house on our block has been continually a problem and two years ago they had a huge college party during the time of Johnny Tommy Game which they were urinating in our bushes. They were littering They were peeing on our cars. This is all documented and more people in a student dwelling means more parties. It means more noise. It means more crowding and more cars on the street. It means more disruption to neighborhoods and fastest way to push homeowners out of the neighborhood. And it's the fastest way too. Just integrate good solid neighborhood here in Saint Paul. I know that Miss Jalali has a completely different view of it, but I would. I would ask her to listen to people that are experiencing. She thinks she's not experiencing because if she were, she would feel differently. Thank you.

Dear Ms. Jalali –

I am writing to state my opinion about the proposed change to zoning code that would allow up to 6 unrelated adults and an unlimited number of minors to live together in one dwelling.

I support the proposition for the following reasons:

- We know that there is an overall shortage of housing.
- Limited supply causes rents to be raised to an unreasonable level, especially for those living on a limited income.
- Putting more people in a home reduces rent per person, hopefully making housing more accessible to the less fortunate.
- In my neighborhood, I am hoping that allowing 6 students to live together would put less pressure on the overall demand for parents to buy houses for their children to live in.
- Increasing density of the population reduces demands on the environment due to reduced traveled miles, increased use of transit or biking, smaller dwellings using less fuel to heat and cool them, etc.; I could go on and on.

I think the city should acknowledge the effects of these changes and plan for the following:

- Requiring more off-street parking with each construction, business or residential. The city has been naïve in thinking that students don't come with cars and each time a house converts to student-occupied, there are ALWAYS 4 cars with them. We see it again and again on Finn and Lincoln. The apartment buildings that went up on Grand within the last few years have pushed cars onto Lincoln so that it is  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's full throughout the school season, especially close to Cretin. Having the street full of cars reduces its overall liveability and appeal, which of course, affects property values.
- I also believe it is naïve to think that landlords will not raise rents if 6 people are planning to occupy a space. It is only natural that they will raise rents to cover their costs for increased wear and tear, especially around St Thomas, where each student is charged rent separately and as much as \$1000/month each.
- I am concerned that having 6 people live together is realistically not a very nice setting for people. Those who will choose to do so, will likely be the most impoverished (ie: minorities), or the least discriminating. I worry that, rather than provide them pleasant and safe options, the city is relegating them to dumpy, crowded older housing and packing a bunch of downtrodden folks together. This could make those neighborhoods even worse. It would really be better for the city to find ways to build more broadly dispersed, smaller dwellings for the poor rather than just pack them into the spaces we have.
- Continuing to provide realistic transit choices.
- A re-evaluation of the changes after 5 years to make sure it is working positively as expected without more negative consequences than anticipated.

I support the city's efforts to increase density overall, and I want it to come with more increases for the cost of parking so that there are true incentives for people to avoid buying cars in the first place. I believe the city council will make the place it wants and if current residents don't like the changes, they will move to where they would rather (or can afford to) live. I just hope my home value doesn't drop and my taxes don't go up even more in the process. It is a great responsibility you have and I am grateful for your hard work.

LeAnn Taylor

Dear Council Member:

I've been studying the history of planning in Saint Paul and US cities for many years. I wanted to share my thoughts with you about the use of the "definition of family" in City Code as a policy and zoning tool.

The definition of family policy comes from the intersection of two problematic historical social realities. The first is a set of patriarchal assumptions about gender norms and how people should live. Victorian-era thinkers created powerful ideological constraints around gender and families. Through a set of religious, class-based, and moralistic social codes, influential people created expectations about how and where families should live, including that women should remain in the home, and that good "Christian" people required these kinds of heteronormative environments in order to avoid immorality.

The flip side of this ideology was that people who lived in diverse, complex urban spaces were morally inferior. Meanwhile, many forms of social castigation applied to women who resisted the confines of this value system. Many early assumptions about city life, in particular the supposed superiority of single-family neighborhoods, stemmed from this oppressive cultural tradition, which was baked into the zoning code in numerous ways. The definition of family — which for decades excluded domestic servants — was the most explicit expression of this moralistic zoning .

The other historical origin of this rule is even worse: anti-immigrant racism. Typically, people who arrived in cities like St. Paul brought with them cultures and traditions that relied on complex family and community ties for many different forms of mutual support. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and acquaintances often formed larger communities of solidarity, or these ties were forged in diverse communities in their new country. Together, as a "family," people would pitch in to purchase property, take care of chores or improvement projects, help with child care, provide cultural connections, and many other things besides.

You can trace family definition policies directly to the racist worldview that saw immigrant communities and traditions as problematic and inferior. Anti-immigrant racism, which was quite prevalent throughout the 20th century, led to the widespread adoption of the definition of family as a way to limit the options of immigrants, people of color, and non-WASP cultural groups. In fact, in St. Paul, keeping immigrants out of the certain neighborhoods, and away from the city as a whole, was an explicit goal stated openly in city planning documents as recently as the late 1950s. While that language has thankfully been exorcised from city documents, the definition of family, which comes from many of the same motives, is still on the books.

Moralistic assumptions about what constitutes a "family" have no place in our City Code. There is no excuse for a city like St. Paul, that purports to be working toward building an anti-racist society, to keep these kinds of rules on the books. Please get rid of it.

Thanks,  
Bill Lindeke

Hello,

I read an article in the villager about increasing rentals from 4 a 6 non related people and I just want to share my opposition to this. I live on Dayton Ave between Snelling and Fairview. We have a St. Thomas rental right next to us. This is the type of landlord that will neglect the house maintenance and basic upkeep - newspapers and garbage littering the front step, trash filling the backyard, won't take care of trees growing in our fence, crumbling chimney, etc. I can only imagine what the house looks like on the inside. But I know if at all possible he would squeeze in more renters to make more money. We have parking issues on our street already which would only get worse with more people and more cars living next door. Not to mention the loud parties and this year - covid restrictions that haven't been followed. Who do we turn to when these issues get worse by allowing more renters?

I understand the purpose of the proposal is to allow for the expansion of the definition of family and allow for multi generational housing. I totally love that idea. I would love it if the rental next to us was a large family. But there has to be some way to do this without allowing college rentals to take over. Can there be a specific restriction on the number of people enrolled in university? Can there be an process to grant exceptions to the current rule?

I would love to hear your thoughts on this proposal.

Thanks,

Katie Nelson

I am writing you today to ask that you vote on the above resolution where City of Saint Paul Chapter 67-Zoning Code, and the overlay districts so described in the present code remain in effect as it presently exists, after you vote on Resolution #21-02. In particular, we are talking about the Student Overlay District involving the neighborhoods around the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul.

My wife and I have lived in our house on Portland Avenue, two and a half blocks east of the UST for almost 50 years now. During that period of time, the College of Saint Thomas has changed from a small men only college with a limited number of students, into a coeducational University of thousands of students. We have lived with this change and had to react to it by introducing permit parking on the streets surrounding the campus to include parts of Merriam Park and Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods and then other restrictions as well, to include finally the present 2012 Student District Overlay Area which limits off campus student housing. The basic rule is three of four students per household and that is for a single family rental unit and a duplex allows for two groups of four students, triplex three groups of four students and etc. Unless they are grandfathered in prior to 2012, all such student dwellings have to have their property boundaries located at least 150 feet from any other student property. We have also seen rentals where parents rent the housing unit in their name and their adult child and are exempt from this distancing rule or need to register the house as student housing. We have also seen parents purchase a house on my block where their college adult student is on the property title as an owner and she can live there with up to 3 other students without distancing from a registered student housing unit. Unless you live in our neighborhood and have seen what can occur with uncontrolled student numbers in our housing units, you probably can not understand our concern about throwing away the present Overlay District for our neighborhoods around the UST. Please do not allow this to change.

The problem is having six (6) students in a residential unit versus four! A 50% increase in our neighborhood. And it appears that it would also allow four students and two friends to also live in the unit.

Yes, the University of Saint Thomas has added two new large dormitories to their campus and they expect to have all freshmen and sophomores living in those two buildings, and it appears that includes even the present freshmen and sophomores who otherwise would commute from their local homes to the campus for school classes. But, it was not so much those underclass students who lived in rentals off campus, but the upper class students who sought to rent in the neighborhood, so we do not expect there to be much of a reduction of students seeking to live off campus.

In any case, please leave the Overlay District presently in force in the books, and if there is a need to change that in a future year, well study it and decide then. It appears as though the Planning Commission did not take much time at all to study the Overlay District. They simply voted to change if from 4 students to 6 students without a study and in my opinion included no out reach to the neighborhood or our district councils to discuss the change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ronald SCOTT Heiderich



Councilperson Jalali:

I am writing to voice my opposition to the Student Housing Overlay District in the proposed change to the Zoning Code provisions regarding the definition of “family” as applied to residential occupancy regulations. While I share the goals of updating the definition of “family”, to better represent a modern and inclusive definition of “family”, I do not believe that the city has done its due diligence to assess the impact on the specific and unique challenges of the Student Housing Overlay District.

My primary concern is student safety. This is not based on speculation, or “arm waving”, but from my recent experience as an owner of a student rental house in the overlay district, and as a parent of college age children. I will begin by providing a quick backstory about how I became a landlord of a student rental, my experiences trying to make sure the kids lived in a safe environment, and close with why I believe the impact of the proposed change has the potential to make students less safe.

Several years ago, we learned that a student rental house near us, was going on the market. We had been watching this home deteriorate from the outside for years. We decided to buy the house, and convert it back to owner occupancy (one of the realities is these houses rarely if ever make it onto the official housing market, where anyone has a chance to purchase. Commonly, student rental homes get sold by word of mouth to other landlords, families never getting a chance to purchase. We wanted to break this cycle. Since we were not interested kicking anyone out to accomplish our goal we ended up letting the kids stay until they graduated (a year and half) before we repaired the years of neglect and sold the house to a young family.

During the time we had students in the home, I started to repair the damage that the years of neglect had wrought on the property. It is easy to walk by a student rental in the overlay district and see the degradation on the outside. I on the other hand, got a good look at what happens to the inside. There were holes punched in walls, water damage, black mold, broken doors, and appliances. My most immediate concerns however, were electricals in disrepair, smoke detectors disconnected and too many extension cords running from place to place in order to keep all the devices plugged in. I had multiple conversations with the kids about obvious safety issues. I replaced, installed new, and re-reconnected smoke and CO2 detectors. However, on multiple instances, I would go over to check on some non-related thing, only to find smoke and CO2 detectors disconnected and/or missing. I would repeat my safety talk, the kids would nod, claim they hadn’t noticed, or blame a visitor. The point I want to make however, is not that I was a contentious landlord who cared about the kid’s safety, but that there are lots of student rentals that do not have such a landlord. This belief is backed up by my experience helping move my own college age kids into college houses and apartments. In one house, my son’s basement flooded with raw sewage, in another we refused to let him sleep there until we replaced missing smoke detector. We made multiple call about a hallway fire extinguisher that (according to the inspection label) was years overdue for a recharge. The fact is, too many student rental houses receive little oversight by landlords and are well out of compliance with basic health and safety regulations. It is easy to say that these situations are all code violations that should and could be addressed by city inspections. However, the house we purchased was a Registered Student Rental, and on a regular inspection cycle. And when took over, there is no way it could have passed a city inspection.

A thing that makes student use of a rental house different from that of a “family” is the individualistic use by a group of completely unrelated “roommates of temporary convenience”. Increasing the number of roommates, not only increases the “wear and tear” factor on many poorly maintained homes, but each roommate brings their own television, gaming system, computer, air-conditioner, space heater, stereo, etc., all connecting to power in every conceivable manner. This phenomenon substantially increases the load on the electrical system, and is inherently dangerous. The houses in this neighborhood tend to be old, with old knob and tube wiring and fuse boxes. And just like the smoke detector behavior I observed, “if the smoke detector is becoming a nuisance... disconnect it”, “if a 15 Amp fuse keeps blowing, replace it with a 30 Amp”, also occurs by folks who plug too many devices into one circuit.

I would like to close by again saying that I support modernizing the definition of “family”, and how it impacts different types of family structures. I do not however believe that changing the number of college students who can live together from 4 to 6, belongs in that conversation. I also believe that there could be unintended consequences of a “one size fits all” approach to solving the afore mentioned issue, and safety of those students is likely one of them.

I have attached a few of the photos we took to document the conditions (before correcting them) of the house we used to own while St. Thomas students were living in it. Thank you for your time, and please include these comments in the record,

Best Regards,

Kirk Wythers

Hello Mitra and Matt,  
Greetings!

I am writing in regard to the proposed update to the Zoning Code regarding the definition of “family” and the City’s occupancy regulations. If revisions to the code are made, I kindly request the Student Housing Overlay District should be exempt from these zoning code changes.

At least provide more time to listen to those who have requested the proposed change be deferred, so that WSNAC, in partnership with the City, can thoroughly examine this proposal, and its significant impacts, in the context of the specific needs of the Overlay District. We ask for your support, as we continue to work on ways to respectfully and safely share the space within this uniquely situated part of our City.

Respectfully,  
Dean

Dean M. Nelson

Dear Councilmember Jalali,

My name is Gina Furlano and I am writing to you with regards to the proposed zoning code change in our neighborhood. My husband sent an email as well. We live on Lincoln Ave between Cleveland and Finn with 2 small children. We moved into the neighborhood 2.5 years ago because we fell in love with the small community feel and also enjoyed the youthful environment that our proximity to St Thomas brought. That being said, we are extremely concerned that a transition from 4 occupants in a rental to 6 could dramatically disturb the fragile ecosystem that is currently established. While we are in favor of a broader, more inclusive and equitable definition of "family" we believe that any change needs to be carefully considered so as to not open the flood gates to student housing in our community. We ask that you defer the proposed change until it can be more rigorously examined by WSNAC, in partnership with the City, to work on ways to successfully, respectfully and safely share the space where we live.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gina Furlano

Dear Councilmember Jalali,

My name is Jacob Podkaminer and I am writing to you with regards to the proposed zoning code change in our neighborhood. I live on Lincoln Ave between Cleveland and Finn with my partner and 2 small children. We moved into the neighborhood 2.5 years ago because we fell in love with the small community feel and also enjoyed the youthful environment that our proximity to St Thomas brought. That being said, we are extremely concerned that a transition from 4 occupants in a rental to 6 could dramatically disturb the fragile ecosystem that is currently established. While we are in favor of a broader, more inclusive and equitable definition of "family" we believe that any change needs to be carefully considered so as to not open the flood gates to student housing in our community. We ask that you defer the proposed change until it can be more rigorously examined by WSNAC, in partnership with the City, to work on ways to successfully, respectfully and safely share the space where we live.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jacob Podkaminer

Hi Mitra,

I voted for you and love all that you stand for. I follow you on Twitter and am so happy with all the bicycle advocacy you do. I think you are a wonderful council person!

I am in favor of density and affordable housing in ALL of our neighborhoods. I am concerned about the proposed housing regulation changes. Six unrelated adults in one household is just too many bodies, cars, pets, etc. Six students in a single household would be a detriment to our neighborhoods. Please reconsider this change or postpone decision to give neighborhood associations more time to study the impacts. Thank you and congratulations on the purchase of your home!

Flannery Delaney

2126 Lincoln Ave

Councilperson Jalali:

I am emailing to express my opposition to including the Student Housing Overlay District in the proposed update to the Zoning Code provisions regarding the definition of “family” as applied to residential occupancy regulations. I hope to write a longer email before tomorrow’s public hearing on the issue, but I want to be sure my “vote” is counted as you tally the messages received on the subject and juggle other matters on what I know is a busy calendar.

Please consider those voices who have asked for the opportunity to defer the proposed change to increase the number of undergraduate students living in a house or duplex dwelling unit within the Overlay District from four to six, so that WSNAC, in partnership with the City, can more rigorously examine this proposal and its significant impacts in the context of the specific needs of the Overlay District. We ask for your support as we continue to work on ways to successfully, respectfully and safely share the space within this uniquely situated part of our City.

Thank you.

Alyssa Rebensdorf

Dear Mitra,

I am asking for your vote to EXEMPT the Student Housing Overlay District from the current zoning proposed changes throughout the City. Increasing density in student rentals in this already saturated student rental area would not bode well in the long run for the students, the neighbors, and the long term stability of this area. I could cite all the difficulties, but have chosen to keep this email brief.

Please SERIOUSLY consider my request.

Thank you so much.

Rachel M. Westermeyer



Dear Councilperson Jalali,

I live at 2153 Lincoln Avenue in Saint Paul. I live nearby the University of St. Thomas.

I am writing to express my concerns with the proposed zoning code to increase the number of unrelated adult occupants to six.

My concern is allowing more than four unrelated adult students to live in the same household. I don't object to the entire proposed change.

I worry allowing more students to live in the same household will cause many problems for neighborhoods as well as the students themselves. Students will end up creating unsafe rooms and spaces to jam more people into a home. And I worry landlords will just increase rent if the number of residents increases, therefore not saving students any money.

With the student housing overlay district, St. Paul has given prior consideration of how student housing affects neighborhoods. I think it is appropriate to distinguish student housing from other housing with any changes to the zoning code.

Please amend the proposed zoning code to limit the number of unrelated adult students to four occupants per housing unit.

Thank you for your consideration,  
David Gibson

Dear Councilperson Jalali,

I live near 3 colleges and having a limit of 4 unrelated people living together has helped our area with student housing issues. I am requesting that the proposed change in occupancy be deferred so that WSNAC in partnership with the City can study its impact on our area and take our situation into context.

Thank you

Kathy N. Manderscheid

Dear Councilmember Jalali,

Our city has for far too long employed a discriminatory definition of family in its zoning code. The time is now to rid ourselves of this outmoded definition in favor of the more inclusive definition being proposed and on which you will vote today.

I trust that I can count on you to support this change to the zoning code to make our city a more welcoming place to everyone who lives here or wants to live here.

Thanks for all you do for our city!

Brian

1943 Princeton Ave

--

Brian C. Martinson, PhD

Dear Councilmember Jalali,

I am writing to regarding the proposed update to the Zoning Code and specifically about the definition of “family” and the City’s occupancy regulations? **I would like to register my vote in opposition to including the Student Housing Overlay District in that zoning code change.** We have a large number of apartments and duplexes rented to students in our neighborhood. I believe that allowing six students instead of four to live together in each student rental unit would seriously degrade our community. We already have parking and noise issues, they will only get worse. In addition, landlords renting to students generally take poorer care of their properties and I fear that these landlords would be the first to take advantage of this code change if it is passed.

Michael Semmens

I'm am vehemently opposed to any changes in Ord 21-4 to redefining a family unit from 4 to 6 individuals. The current limits has stabilized the neighborhood for the time being, but any increase to this number is detrimental to this stability. I happen to live one block from St. Thomas on a block that has mostly rental units on it plus the block behind me also has mostly rental units. It is contently a problem having so many rental units with the larger number of students in this area. The trash containers are always overflowing with trash. Trash bags are then left outside of these containers for weeks at a time with rodents breaking into these bags or getting into overstuff containers.

The same problem exist with recycling containers. Most students don't understand that the recycling company will not pick up anything outside of the container. Again recycling material left for weeks and months outside in the alleys. Adding 50% more people will just make the situation even worst.

As for parking, these blocks are always filled to capacity with cars now. I can't imagine what it will look like with adding more people with cars to the area. My next door neighbors are constantly making noise on weekends when they come home very late. Not to the point of calling the police on them, but they do not understand that just talking in a normal voice at 2am outside is disturbing. Playing music in their homes until 4am—again not blasting the music out enough to call the police but enough to carry out to the neighborhood. These are minor problems but will only get much worst by adding 50% more students to the area.

Do not think for a minute that the cost of rental units will not increase since landlords will see that they can charge more based on the cost per individuals living at their rental unit. Having lived in this area for over 35 years, I have witness the neighborhood declining over the years due to the amount of rental units and increase amount of students living here. Adding more will just make everything worst.

Thomas Malone

Dear CM Jalali,

I hope you are doing well!

I write to encourage you to support both the proposal to update the definition of "family" in St. Paul zoning code as well as the proposal to rezone the lots on the NW corner of Marshall and Cleveland.

I myself was impacted as a renter in St. Paul by the outdated definition of family while in college. Our rental house had more than four bedrooms across three levels, but because of these outdated definitions and zoning code, only four names went on the lease, leaving some of us potentially vulnerable as unofficial renters.

I wish the proposed changes went even further, as the recommendation for six adults is still fairly unrealistic when we have some very large houses that could easily house more people, but I am still highly supportive of the update.

I also strongly support the rezoning proposal for the corner of Marshall and Cleveland. This common-sense change will help add reasonable and appropriate density to a corner that is already well served by transit (and by bike facilities, though ones that are sub-standard and functionally obsolete) and will soon be even better served as the B Line is developed and operational.

My only comment would be to try and ensure that as little off-street parking as possible is included with the proposed project, to encourage low-car households and sustainable transportation use as well as keeping project costs down to make rent more affordable.

Thanks as always for your amazing work representing us here in Ward 4!

Zack Mensinger

I am opposed to any changes





Ms. Jiali,

I am in FAVOR of changing the definition of a family for the city as it is outdated and does not support multi-generational homes, however, I ask that you **continue to support restrictions in the Student Housing Neighborhood Impact Overlay District. Please keep the rules at a maximum of four students and other requirements.**

When I attend land use meetings I see the idea of "housing density" and "housing affordability" used by developers and rental owners to serve their own financial gain rather than supporting low-income households. This was the case last week at the variance request for the building on Finn and St. Claire. The developer claimed they were increasing housing affordability with market-rate apartments. I want to see developments and rule changes that actually benefit low-income households.

By increasing the definition of a family in this area, we are benefitting the rental owners who profit from housing as many students as possible without consideration for the neighborhood.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Carri Stuhr

Members of the St. Paul City Council:

My name is Harry Balley, and I have lived at 2062 Iglehart Avenue for 25 years with my wife and daughters. We have called this home as a residence and community.

We enjoy our location in the city which includes the proximity with regards to St. Thomas. There are some benefits and well as challenges. Years ago, my weekend routine included walking along my property to pick up beer cans and bottles the were dropped in in yard and along the sidewalk. I will say, there has been a dramatic reduction in this issue and we feel that St. Thomas and our liaison Amy Johnson have helped educate the students on what it means to be part of the community.

That being said, there are some good arguments for making a broader change to the zoning code, with its outdated definition of "family." However, undergraduate college students who rent housing for 1-2 years are not the kind of nontraditional family unit that the study was meant to address, and there is arguably no-good reason to apply the broader zoning change to student rentals within the Student Housing Overlay District. The reduction in students per unit has coincided with the reduction in disturbances, parties, and general disregard for the neighborhood.

The Student Housing Overlay District, an initiative of then councilman Russ Stark, was put into place in 2012 to stabilize housing stock in Merriam Park and Macalester Groveland. Many single-family homes around the University of St. Thomas were being converted to student rentals and there was real concern that a vibrant part of the city was slowly degrading into a Dinkytown environment, driving out long term renters and homeowners. We are grateful to the City for enacting this important zoning code provision, which remains an important tool we rely on to keep our neighborhood strong. Increasing the number of undergraduate students who can live together in a rental house from four to six will undermine that and other shared goals.

Please listen to those who have requested that the proposed change be deferred, so that WSNAC, in partnership with the City, can more rigorously examine this proposal, and its significant impacts, in the context of the specific needs of the Overlay District. We ask for your support as we continue to work on ways to successfully, respectfully and safely share the space within this uniquely situated part of our City.

Thank you,

Harry Balley

Council members, another way to look at this resolution. I have asked as have others that you keep the Chapter 67 Overlay Districts language as it is presently, and not include the changes recommended by the Planning Commission. There is another way to consider this. The Overlay District pertains really, only to Student Housing, undergraduate students. It does not in my opinion prevent the new "household" definition from allowing the larger family groups that #21-02 suggests, from occupying housing in the Overlay District.

I have a registered student housing in the Overlay District next-door to my home of almost 50 years, and if the landlord can not find students to rent his house, he could certainly find some people who fit the new household definition who would rent the house, and that would be okay, just not more than 4 undergraduate students not related.

Please consider keeping the Overlay District intact with perhaps changing the word family to household.

Thanks, Scott Heiderich

> VOTE NO!

>

> Dear Council person,

>

> I, and most of the neighborhood, is opposed to the proposed apartment building on Cleveland and Marshall.

>

> It will shade the gardens on Iglehart and eliminate their privacy in their yards and in their homes.

>

> The continued tearing down of over 100 year old homes for more apartments is inappropriate for our sweet 112 plus year old neighborhood.

>

> Our property values are affected in a neighborhood that pays very high taxes.

> Yes, we pay very high taxes here.

>

> Many of us in this stable neighborhood invested in our homes and the city in the 60's and 70's when many were fleeing to the burbs.

> and this is the thanks we get? More and more apartments?

>

> We are not stupid, the proposed 1 bedroom apartments are for St Thomas

> Students and the continued encroachment of students into our

> neighborhood is disruptive to our peaceful lives. (another story)

>

> Please help preserve our beautiful antique neighborhood and vote against the proposed apartment building on Cleveland and Marshall.

>

> Thankyou.

> Respectfully,

> Nancy Hone

Councilwoman Jalali,

I am writing to ask for your opposition to the changes in density in Student Housing zoning code and the definition of "family". 4-college aged students to one rental property should stay consistent with current requirements (and NOT move to 6 or more).

In addition, we oppose the zoning change for the proposed rental property on the corner of Cleveland and Marshall. Overall, the proposed concept has a long way to go before approval (re-thinking needs on affordable housing, transportation/parking, shadow study needed for neighbors, and the list goes on). We are not against development.. but we are FOR smart and sustainable development that is appropriate for the neighborhood.

Thank you,

Tina May and Dave Townsend

This is to let you know that I am vehemently opposed to any zoning changes that would expand the number of people allowed in a dwelling or that would allow more building in order to increase density. I am heartsick over the recent changes in my neighborhood.

Mary Ann Jackson