

5-6-09

Dear City Manager, City Commissioners, Planning Commissioners, and Planning Department,

I am writing on behalf of the Oread Neighborhood Association. For several years we have been dealing with problems presented by the boarding house/congregate living code that allows houses to be converted into boarding houses/congregate living units that allow for larger numbers of tenants to live in a house. A house (not a boarding house) in high density areas is not to have more than 4 unrelated individuals. A boarding house can theoretically house up to 20 plus people if landlords provide the required parking. Parking requirements for boarding houses are less stringent than standard rentals. We believe that there is a place for boarding houses but only if the size is reasonable and if there is adequate parking. This problem has been regularly discussed with City staff over the years.

Financial incentives have resulted in landlords and developers turning houses in mixed-use neighborhoods into boarding houses/congregate living units. These houses now typically have eight tenants. This has resulted in many "party houses" that have caused more disruption and more illegal activities than usual in college neighborhoods. It is also creating more stress on off-street parking. As you can imagine, tenants have many visitors with cars. It is feared that large boarding houses/congregate living units will likely drive the few remaining homeowners out of mixed-use neighborhoods. We believe that some owner occupants living in neighborhoods are essential to avoid blight and insure stability.

City-wide neighborhood associations are presently working with the City and Planning Department to address problems with the boarding house/congregate living code. David Corliss, City Manager, suggested that each neighborhood association and LAN (Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods) ask the City Commission, Planning Commission and Planning Department to consider a moratorium on boarding-house/congregate living home conversions and additions while the code changes are under study and consideration. ONA fully supports such a moratorium as a means to protect our neighborhood as well as other neighborhoods from abuse of the existing codes. We believe that serious action is needed to stabilize this unfair, opportunistic practice.

Sincerely, Candice Davis, ONA Vice President, LAN Representative