

Bobbie Walthall

To: David L. Corliss
Subject: RE: Statement for the Commissions, from the University of Kansas

To: Members of the City Commission
From: Jeff Weinberg

The University of Kansas joins the Oread Neighborhood Association in bringing to your attention the urgent need to require units identifying as “boarding houses” to be held to the same inspection standards as other rental housing. The growing numbers of such unregulated structures present a safety concern to the people who live in them and to the neighborhoods. “Boarding houses” often have inadequate smoke alarm systems, antiquated electrical wiring, decks that may not be safe, and insufficient parking. In addition, it has been observed that if the owners do not live on the premises, the structures often evolve into party houses, adding to the risk factors for our entire community.

We thank the city commission in advance for addressing the loophole that allows such “boarding houses” to skirt basic inspection standards.

To: Mayor Rob Chestnut and City Commissioners
Re: Boarding House Text Amendment
Date: January 31, 2010

Greetings:

The Oread Plan states:

“ The Oread Neighborhood is a place where a diverse array of people live, work, study and celebrate. Existing compatibility with its character, maintaining housing variety and maintaining neighborhood scale commercial areas are important. Supporting a healthy and safe environment is essential for the neighborhood to maintain its sense of community.

Goal #1 Goal 1 – Land Use

Maintain a variety of housing types to provide a balance in the diversity of people living in the neighborhood while maintaining strong neighborhood scale commercial areas.”

My wife and I moved into the Oread Neighborhood in 1988. Our two sons grew up in our home, which is on the National Historic Register. In 1988, ten of the twenty-two houses on our block were owner-occupied. The other houses were rentals, mostly divided into several apartments. There was more noise in the Oread than in our previous neighborhood, but we adjusted.

Now only four homes on our block are owner-occupied. In the last few years a number of houses on our block have been converted to boarding houses - legally or illegally. This has led to an increase in big parties, noise, urination in our yard, trash, and parking problems. With the increase in boarding houses, and many unresponsive tenants, we have had to call the police often, during the week and on weekends.

The Oread Neighborhood has always included a diverse group of people living in the neighborhood: people of various income levels; families, couples, and singles; owner-occupants and renters. Residents have always included professors, assistant professors, other working people, graduate students, and undergraduate students. Some renters help the owner- occupants add stability to the neighborhood. And some do the

opposite.

The boarding house text amendment makes the highest economic use of every property in the neighborhood a boarding house. Thanks to the financial incentives provided by the relaxed parking standards, more and more houses will be converted to boarding houses. What landlord would keep a house as single-family or a few apartments when s/he can tear out 2 or 3 kitchens and bathrooms, add bedrooms, rent to more people, and make more money? Only those landlords who have a high level of commitment to the quality of life in the Oread and in Lawrence, who value Lawrence's history.

I do not believe that professors will group together to rent a boarding house. Some grad students might. I doubt 3 or 4 couples, or 2 families, will join together to rent a boarding house. I doubt janitors, construction workers, office workers, or serious students will join together to rent a boarding house.

I believe this text amendment which allows every home to become a boarding house will ultimately create a neighborhood of undergraduates seeking places to party close to downtown and the football stadium. I believe that the proliferation of boarding houses will create more of the externalities that we have talked about repeatedly over the last few months: trash, noise, urination in public, underage drinking, blight and parking problems.

These externalities, plus fewer and fewer classic apartments for rent in the Oread, will force the diverse population to leave this neighborhood. The City should not favor boarding houses over apartments by relaxing parking standards through this amendment.

Thank you,
Kyle Thompson
President
Oread Neighborhood Association

To: Mayor Rob Chestnut and City Commissioners
Re: Boarding House Text Amendment
Date: February 1, 2010
For consideration at the Feb. 2, 2010 City Commission meeting

Commissioners:

I have owned and lived in my home in the Oread Neighborhood for 30 years. During that time span, I have observed many changes there, the major one being an increasing exodus of owner-occupants. We are the part of Oread's diverse population that provides stability and stewardship for our neighborhood but we now comprise only 10% of it. Since those who live here are the barometers of elements that threaten the safety and livability of the Oread, they should be accorded a major voice in shaping the neighborhood plan and any text amendments that help achieve that plan's goals.

One of the plan's basic goals is to encourage owner-occupancy. Congregate living that allows more than four unrelated persons in a dwelling unit is being unfairly favored by the less stringent parking minimum than for other housing types and by higher occupants. Owner-occupants will be priced out of the neighborhood if economic incentives for these high-density living situations continue.

The Oread has reached a tipping point in density, contributing to parking, noise, trash, crime, and other negative issues at an escalating rate. The high-occupant congregate living houses have increased in numbers over the past 10 years and are factors in this escalation. I urge the city commission to ask the planners to look again at the intent of our neighborhood plan and find solutions that impose uniform parking requirements of one space per bedroom for all dwelling units and that restrict occupancy to no more than four unrelated people in units below a certain square footage(perhaps 4,000 sq. ft.).

This is a highly visible, historic and valuable neighborhood for the entire city. The consequences of losing any more of the Oread owner-occupant population will turn our neighborhood from a true community into merely a housing project. We look to you to help prevent that.

Sincerely,
Linda Haskins

Dear Mayor and City Commissioner,

Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods wishes to express support for the Oread Neighborhood in accomplishing a neighborhood plan that will reflect their goals toward establishing a stable, healthy neighborhood. Maintaining and encouraging owner occupants, preserving historic structures, improving infrastructure and addressing blight issues are major goals. While the area has a mix of living units we believe much can be done to stabilize and improve the area.

LAN believes that boarding houses in particular are a threat to the area and especially a threat to owner occupants. Owner occupants are a stabilizing factor in all neighborhoods. Boarding houses in the Oread neighborhood are being used as gathering places for large parties both inside and outside the home. The original intent of boarding houses was lost long ago. They used to be owner occupied and provided meals to their room renters. Somehow this use was altered about 10 years ago without discussion or process. The number of undergraduate students that live in these houses far exceeds the rule of no more than 4 unrelated individuals living in a single dwelling unit (house). Because the parking requirement is lower than other single dwelling units, they are rapidly growing in numbers. Less required parking allows them to rent to more individuals. Many are extensions of fraternities and sororities that provide a place for off campus drinking.

Extensive expansion of boarding houses is a threat to the Oread neighborhood and other neighborhoods with similar zoning. The code amendments being offered by the Planning Commission are insufficient and provide little to address the Oread Neighborhood Association's concerns.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn L. Klingenberg

Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods - President

City of Lawrence

The Sunset Hills Neighborhood Association supports the Oread Neighborhood Association in its efforts to make certain that proposed changes in Boarding House rules, or other potential changes that could impact neighborhood densities and negatively impact the value of single family residences.

Owner-occupied residences typically provide the greatest stability, commitment and personal investment in a neighborhood. Certainly there is a place, and value, for higher density zoning. In our neighborhood, we have high and medium density zoning with Meadowbrook and adjacent multi-family zoning. We are fortunate in that, for the most part, we have good neighbors and the areas are pretty well defined.

In the Oread neighborhood, their situation is different because of their proximity to campus and the conversion of many single family residences into multiple occupancy. What that means, of course, is that the appeal for single family occupancy is much more fragile. It is imperative, in our opinion that everything possible is done to protect, enhance and encourage single family occupancy where it presently exists. Nothing should be allowed that will intensify existing development that is not in a well-defined higher occupancy area. We don't encourage denying anyone the ability to do what is presently permitted... we absolutely believe, however, that changes should not be made to allow a higher density, increased traffic, increased pressure on existing parking or anything else that will have a negative impact on existing single family and owner-occupied residences.

Thank you for your consideration and we very much hope you will support the integrity and value of single family occupancy in the Oread Neighborhood!

Janne Lees, President Sunset Hills Neighborhood

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