



March 2, 2021

Dear City Council members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed ordinance changes amending the zoning code as recommended in the Definition of Family Zoning Study. We appreciate the work that has been done to study the existing definition of family in the Saint Paul zoning code and its impacts, and to prepare a replacement for the existing language. We are glad the City of Saint Paul is preparing to make this change; it is long overdue.

The proposed definition reflects the makeup of our city and provides much-needed flexibility for households with different cultural norms for sharing shelter, for unrelated persons who like the economic and social benefits of shared living arrangements, and for multigenerational households whose members may not all be officially related according to the definitions in Chapter 186 of our Legislative Code. All of these households deserve to be legally recognized as cohabitants or “families” in our city. Furthermore, the new definition best supports housing affordability in our city by enabling more adults to share their housing costs.

We believe the best way to redefine “family” in our zoning code is to set the definition as broadly as possible to support the widest range of living arrangements for the familial, social, and economic needs of Saint Paul’s residents. It is increasingly common in Saint Paul and across the country for unrelated adults to live together and our zoning code should recognize this change. The zoning code’s definition of family was never intended to regulate minimum acceptable standards for residential buildings, or to prevent hazardous living situations; rather, there are other sections of city codes and state building code that accomplish this. We trust that those regulations will continue to ensure safe living conditions in Saint Paul.

Thank you for considering these comments and for your more holistic view of households.

Sincerely,

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