

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Absentee Landlord Student Rentals in Neighbourhoods

From: Lyn Folkes

Sent: Monday, August 9, 2021 5:59 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Kelsey, Lisa <Lisa.Kelsey@hamilton.ca>

Subject: 4.21 (I) Absentee Landlord Student Rentals in Neighbourhoods

Dear Hamilton Council,

Please include this correspondence for the Planning Committee Agenda for Item 10.2 "License Rental Housing (PED21097/LS21022) (Wards 1 8, and parts of Ward 14)" for August 10th:

The issue of Absentee-Landlord Student Rentals is of extremely serious concern to me and my family who live behind Mohawk College in the Buchanan Park neighbourhood in Ward 8. We have lived here for 22 years now, and are still waiting for these run-down and overcrowded student house hazards to be regulated! With all the families with young children living here due to the close proximity of the elementary school, you'd think that the mischievous behavior that happens at college-aged student rentals would be controlled here. Families with children deserve more consideration to keep their children safe.

At the student rental properties in my neighbourhood there have been many problems. The more dangerous ones involve fires, gas leaks, floods and other health hazards that affect the safety of the rental residents and especially their surrounding neighbours. After a fire occurred at a crowded student rental on Delmar Drive (my street at the time), and friends of mine were afraid that their house was going to catch fire as well. I learned that the City was not allowed inside rental properties to check for basic health and safety violations. I could not believe this sheer irresponsible nonsense! I found this completely absurd and unbelievable, so I called the City and they confirmed it! I felt abandoned. What if a student rental started up next to me and set my home on fire? Does no one care about my family being harmed? Obviously not after 22 years with no regulations in place to fix it yet! We finally have a couple of Councillors who care about this serious issue and want to make life easier and safer for working families and lower our high stress levels. So PLEASE SUPPORT THEM Council! We need and deserve this after waiting so long! After voicing my concerns and attending College meetings that the City referred me to, and getting no help at all -- I'd given up on you long ago. I didn't think anyone really cared about my family.

The most noticeable problem is loud partying, of course. The more students you squeeze into a rental, the larger and louder the parties become. The music has been so loud on our street before that glasses in my kitchen have rattled more than once. I have called the police on numerous occasions and they eventually arrived to shut down these parties. Although I really appreciate the help of our great police force, after getting woken up in the middle of the night, phoning the police and discussing the disruption, and then the police arrive with flashing lights and sirens, there are often loud voices heard after the music is finally shut down, and then all the door slamming and loud complaining from the parties, taxis arriving to drive the intoxicated, and then the police finally leave -- and there are two hours to sleep before the next work day begins. The neighbours never get a good enough sleep when these parties occur. And big or small, the loud music and yelling is what wakes us up. Every new student rental near us has started in this fashion, and they don't learn after the first police visit -- it takes several every time. At one house near us the parties got louder and larger every week until something finally stopped it -- the landlord finally smartened up!

And my children had to put up with these loud parties too, even if they had the flu or a big test the next day, it made no difference. Why are parents subjected to this just because Hamilton has a lack of simple laws in place? It's a real insult to

taxpayers that the City has waited this long to regulate student housing. I've never understood why it takes months sometimes to get an overcrowded student rental to shape up?!

And these parties don't have to be next door to wake you from a solid sleep either. I have wandered the streets of Buchanan Park after midnight searching for the house with the crazily loud party -- and that is dangerous enough for me to be doing! And sometimes the party is 3 blocks from my house! This is a HUGE problem. And absentee landlords cause this huge problem because no one responsible lives in the house to prevent these illegal events from happening.

Each time I have been woken from a sound sleep, I wondered how many other taxpayers were being so rudely disturbed the same night? We have to wake up early, get our tired children off to school and then get to work ourselves in the morning -- it's very difficult to get through your busy morning routine, let alone the rest of your day, when you haven't had a decent sleep. This is not fair to working people or to our youngest students!

We have a pathway that runs between our house and our neighbour's. and there have been some serious problems arise when groups of students 'hang out' there too. Of course the drugs are legal now even though drug sales that were ongoing there recently were not. We collected drugs and took them to the police who took action to get rid of the dealers. So far, so good, but I have found needles condoms, plastic tubes, burned pieces of containers, etc. -- all related to drug use in a City pathway that is normally used multiple times/day by our youngest elementary students. We also find broken alcohol bottles and once a couple students had oral sex that was visible from our dining-room window. It makes me wonder how many times my young children saw inappropriate behaviors from our property? I can only hope they didn't. Too many students living in a neighbourhood can do alot of damage!

I know a homeowner that had a large pile of flammable material in their yard and they received a 30-day notice to clear it away because it caused a fire hazard -- so why are student rental houses allowed to break other laws that are made to keep us safe? This makes absolutely no sense. This is vital for the safety of all the good innocent people who are unlucky enough to end up next door to a student rental. Please regulate all student rental houses as soon as possible! Don't wait any longer!!!

There are also too many cars parked at one house where student rental overcrowding occurs. I have seen cars parked on lawns on my street before -- that is unhealthy for the environment, unsightly to see from your living-room window and also illegal! I regularly saw the front yard of a rental house on Delmar Drive at Columbia, covered in cars parked all over a corner property and nothing was done even after neighbours complained. A couple of parking tickets isn't enough. I have heard that more bylaw officers were assigned to our neighbourhood before the pandemic started and it seemed to help a bit. I hope that extra law enforcement continues here when the shutdown ends too.

I have seen students sitting in their cars in front of an overcrowded residence with their cars' radios at full volume past 11 pm, also on Delmar Drive. They have to run their engines to keep the radio on that long too -- polluting GHG emissions needlessly for long stretches. I wondered how students could afford to waste that much gasoline but today of course, some of them are far more wealthy than we are now.

I know the family that lives across the street from this student rental quite well too. They said they were woken up at all different hours of the night and had to go outside to ask that music be turned down and conversations taken indoors or in the backyard at least. Even with the students in the backyard sometimes the noise would still wake my poor friends who were trying to raise a young girl and boy at the time. Why should any family have to endure this nuisance time after time, sometimes night after night? it really does drive you crazy.

The noise from that house woke my family up once too -- from over a block away! Not to mention the car headlights flashing in their windows and the car doors slamming over and over again all night long. That family got very little sleep sometimes and they are both educators. How are they supposed to go out and be effective in their classrooms without a decent sleep? And they said it was often noisy during the day on weekends as well. These are nice people who do not deserve that kind of punishment -- it leads to mental illness and often physical illnesses too, which I know they have

both suffered. And were the students across the street sympathetic at all when they both had parents pass away? NO! These houses need to be regulated!!

I also have students block my driveway when they park often. I can't count how many times I've had to call bylaw just so I could get in or out of my own driveway. I know more bylaw officers have been assigned to our area recently but after schools go back to in-person classes this fall, I am worried about the parking problems that may arise again here. Too many students in our neighbourhood make our lives much more stressful than they need to be! Imagine if your driveway was blocked every other time you came home -- it would get really frustrating wouldn't it? Trust me, I know.

Another common problem with student rental houses in Buchanan Park neighbourhood is the lack of yard maintenance. Often these places are full of invasive weeds which spread to our yards, the lawns are not cut often enough and the property is a real eyesore with old furniture, mattresses and the like on the weedy lawn. The houses are not maintained the way a permanent resident would maintain them - paint is left peeling, lawns are left unmowed and garbage or junk lays about the yardsometimes. Again, absentee landlords are the problem -- they don't care as long as they get lots of rent from crowding students into what used to be a nice family home. These houses are destroyed and often remain rentals forever because no one has the money to renovate an entire house that has been divided up into 10 separate bedrooms. I have seen sheets hung in living-room windows because that room was converted to a bedroom - how nice for the neighbours! Student rental houses are often trashed and no one wants to live beside one in our neighbourhood!

It needs to be said that Mohawk College creates many of our neighbourhood student problems themselves but have done very little about it when we've asked. The nicer students tell me that Mohawk College charges too much for a parking space or there are no more College parking permits left to purchase. They don't have enough residence rooms on campus either - I have attended meetings concerning these matters at Mohawk College in the past and in response they built one residence that is too small. They recently enlarged their parking lot but it won't meet their needs so the overflow is still dumped onto us to deal with. The College needs to build more residences instead of all the new classrooms that are ongoing, so that students are not forced to live in our neighbourhood! The College has built many additions in recent years - but no more student residences! This needs to change too.

Kitchener/Waterloo was already regulating student rentals when I lived there in 1990. Only five unrelated adults could be living in any rental home at any one time. This solved most of the problems that we still experience in Hamilton. Why is Hamilton taking so long to protect people from serious disturbance and danger here? Why?

I beg you not to delay this decision -- we needed student rentals regulated 22 years ago already!! Please, please do this in September this year -- DO NOT WAIT ANY LONGER! I wish you could all experience living beside a student residence because then something would be done immediately - it really can be pure HELL.

Every time a house goes up for sale in our neighbourhood there is a big commotion about whether or not students are moving in -- because having a student rental next door can completely destroy your life and lower your property value as well. I would definitely have mental-health problems if students moved in beside me because I have had enough headaches from distant students, and heard too many horror stories from poor friends who live closer to student rentals than we do right now - you never know when that might change though!

The houses rented to people who are not students have never been a problem for us in the neighbourhood -- but the over-packed student houses are a complete disgrace and definitely degrade the quality of life here more every time a new one arises. I know more than one resident who has moved away from Buchanan Park because a student rental started up beside them. This was definitely a factor in two fairly recent sales on Laurier Avenue.

In fact, that house first became an Air B&B after it was sold (which should also be strictly regulated, by the way!!!). And then someone moved in who we think was selling drugs - many shady characters visited regularly - and now I think it is a student rental. The first week students were there, they didn't take their garbage bins in, and they were blown down the street. One bin banged loudly against the neighbour's fence. She called me in the morning to investigate and said she couldn't sleep all night but was too scared to go outside alone. I took the can back to the rental house and told them

to bring their bins in every week because they kept a poor widow awake all night. She was terrified and the resident uncaringly said that the garbage wasn't his job. He didn't care at all!!

My children are grown now but they still live in Buchanan Park. One of them would like to start a family here soon and I would like to see them have more protection than we had from student problems while their children are young. We have been negatively affected by the behavior of students living in absentee-landlord student rental houses ever since we moved here in 1999, and the number of rentals has just continued to grow over the years. The entire neighbourhood rejoices when a student rental house is purchased by a family and fixed up!! Hallelujah!

I have heard and/or witnessed serious complaints from different neighbours in our ward concerning students renting homes in our area. Honestly, this situation is a big disgrace to the City of Hamilton and if not regulated very soon, I am concerned about these rentals completely ruining our neighbourhood one day. We have had many discussions about this around our dinner table.

I am desperately hoping that Council will enforce regulation of these dangerous rentals THIS SEPTEMBER, and not add two more years of stress that continues to disturb whatever remaining peace we have left in our lives today. Every time a home sells nearby I panic that it will be yet another rowdy bunch of students to destroy my sanity. There have been too many loud partying student rental homes near us already, often requiring police intervention after enough neighbours complain. Council is supposed to protect tax-paying residents from this type of abuse. The health of families is at stake and many have young children who attend the elementary school here. Our neighbourhood needs to be safer from dangerous student rentals!

During the pandemic, schools have been online and we have noticed that the disturbance in our neighbourhood from absentee landlord rentals has been very minimal compared to when schools were having in person classes. It's quieter, less people 'hang out' in the pathway beside our house, less people walk by smoking drugs, I have not seen one alcohol bottle in my yard or in the pathway, nor have I found any drug paraphernalia in the pathway. This alone is evidence of how much the student rental population disrupts an ordinary tax-payer's life day-to-day. It's much safer and quieter without the students here!

Our neighbourhood would be much better off in various ways without ANY student rentals but I know you won't do that. But the least you can do is support my Councillor and the others in REGULATING THEM AT LEAST! PLEASE JUST GET THIS DONE!!!

We already have to put up with flashing digital signs which should not be allowed in residential areas at schools and churches which are exempt from Hamilton's sign bylaws -- please work on changing that next!! We also have a teenager with a racecar of some kind that now wakes us up at night often and then there are all the new Covid-19 untrained barking dogs to put up with -- something has to give! Please regulate student rentals VERY STRICTLY!!!! It just isn't fair to us that this has taken so long and we all know the absentee landlords are getting even wealthier just because they don't have to maintain their rentals properly! We would be fined by the City if we acted like an absentee landlord does.

My heart goes out to every mother and father who has had to deal with inconsiderate student neighbours. This kind of renting should never have been allowed in Hamilton in the first place -- why are surrounding cities always way ahead of us on these easy to implement laws that would bring peace of mind to so many tax-paying families? I've never understood why the City didn't address the disgraceful state of student rentals in Hamilton decades ago. The time to regulate them is TODAY!! DO NOT DELAY AGAIN!!!!!! Have some heart, have some sympathy!!

You would not put up with a student rental beside your home -- we all know this is true! HELP US PLEASE and support our good Councillor Danko today!!

Sincerely and with great urgency,
Lyn Folkes