


# User Guide for Neighborhood Relations



Presented by the Housing subcommittee  
of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee  
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# Introduction

**You live in the neighborhood.** You own your home – or you may be a renter who selected this area for its livability. You're here in St. Paul because it's a great place to live and the quality of your life matters to you and to your family. You're interested in doing everything you can to maintain and increase the value of your property.

But you have a student-occupied rental property on your block. We're guessing that sometimes you experience lifestyle clashes. You keep different hours. Sometimes students are boisterous. They talk loudly, play music at a loud volume or drive too fast. And sometimes renters and landlords don't treat their properties as if they plan to live there as long as you do. They don't seem to care about the appearance of their houses. Although you value diverse neighborhoods and higher education, you'd like to do what you can to help make your neighborhood a quiet, safe and friendly place to live.

St. Paul is home to six major college campuses and a host of other specialized programs in higher education. We support higher education in St. Paul and we applaud all those who work to further their knowledge and training to become better citizens in our communities; however, for those of us living in the residential neighborhoods near these campuses, it can be a challenge to preserve a sense of "quiet enjoyment" of our homes when faced with the daily pressures of life next to a college campus. From campus users seeking free parking on our neighborhood streets to the frustrations of having a student party house on the block, we have special concerns that frequently require us to rise to a higher level of citizenship and community activism. Simply put, safe and quiet neighborhoods don't just happen in and around college campuses – they are created by the efforts of home owners, students, college administrators, city officials and others, all working together to preserve what we love about living in St. Paul.

This booklet has been prepared by the Housing subcommittee of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC, [www.wsnac.net](http://www.wsnac.net)) to assist you in making your neighborhood the kind of place where young families, retirees, students, long-term renters and landlords can find ways to live and work together. Inside you'll find everything from descriptions of city ordinances regarding parking and property maintenance to contact lists to tips for dealing with students and absentee landlords. Because this pamphlet was prepared by WSNAC, the focus is on the

Merriam Park and Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods; however, some of the materials are borrowed from other neighborhoods, and most are applicable to anywhere in the city. The key to using this information is this: Get to know your neighbors. Decide what is important to you, and then work together to make it happen. Remember that thriving communities are built on contributions, big and small, at home and at city hall. Shovel snow for an elderly neighbor. Write a letter to a landlord asking him or her to tend to a degrading property. Invite a group of students over for a potluck at the beginning of the school year. Ask your district council and city council representatives and college administrators to develop programs to address your concerns. If you care about what goes on around you, and you do your part, you'll see the fruits of your labors. —*The Housing subcommittee of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee*

## Landlord Relationships

“Landlord” can be a “four-letter word” sometimes, but many people who own rental property mean well and have the best of intentions for keeping up the places they rent. We’ve found that if you meet a landlord halfway, you’ll get the same response in return. Sometimes all it takes is just a little friendly contact to create a mutual understanding. Believe it or not, it’s likely your landlord wants to be a good neighbor. Here are some tips for establishing a good relationship with a landlord on your block.

### **RENTAL PROPERTIES AND LANDLORDS: NINE SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Designate a small group of neighbors to identify and contact the landlord *before* you experience a problem with tenants. Work to establish a friendly relationship, share contact information, and express a desire to address quality of life issues related to living in a mixed residential neighborhood.
2. Use this time to address issues regarding student behavioral expectations, including porch usage, parking, social gatherings and coming-and-going concerns.
3. Request that leases contain specific language regarding consequences for problem behavior that results in police visits and the issuance of citations. For example:
  - Does the landlord have a “no keg provision” in the lease?
  - Does the landlord have strict lease language that addresses code or

ordinance violations? We discovered this language in an actual lease we consulted: “Use of the property that violates city ordinance or code or violation of state or federal law is grounds for eviction and termination of the lease agreement.”

- Does the lease address party-related behavior? This wording which we discovered might help: “House parties are absolutely prohibited. Tenants and/or guests shall not provide, sell, use, or possess any illegal controlled substance of any nature including, but not limited to, drugs and/or paraphernalia or, with respect to minors, alcohol. Tenants shall be immediately evicted, without notice.”
  - Does the landlord use lease language that addresses quality of life? We found this in one lease we read: “Neighbors, the university, the police, and the landlord have no tolerance for behavior that is disrespectful to the neighborhood. This includes, but is not limited to: parties, noise, trash on and around the property, car horns, reckless driving, cars left on the street during a snow emergency, obvious underage drinking, and anything else that might prevent families in surrounding homes from enjoying peace in their neighborhood. Tenants and their guests are expected not to act in loud, boisterous, unruly, or thoughtless ways. Nor are they to disturb or violate other residents’ right to peace and quiet.”
4. Request a plan for snow removal (including any alley fees), yard care, alley maintenance and garbage removal. It generally works best at student houses if the landlord provides for these services in the lease. Is there someone on the block (e.g., a 13-year-old) who could cut the grass, shovel the sidewalk or rake the leaves?
  5. Does the landlord know the St. Paul occupancy code? In general, no more than four unrelated adults may live together in a rental home.
  6. Request contact numbers, including the landlord’s contact information and a list of contact numbers for each group of tenants. Provide neighborhood contact numbers for the landlord. Meet the landlord halfway.
  7. Does the landlord know of resources available through the University of St. Thomas?
    - The university has a renter education program that a landlord can require for new tenants. (The University will also work with other college students.)
    - If the landlord acquires written permission from the students, the university can screen potential tenants for on-campus conduct violations.

8. If there is a police visit to the house and a citation is issued, is the landlord willing to write a letter to put the tenants on notice? Would the landlord send copies to the university, the community council, and a selected neighborhood representative? Here's a sample letter that we obtained from one helpful landlord:

"I am following up on our conversation regarding the recent disturbance at \_\_\_\_\_. Any further lease violations regarding noise, parties, and/or neighbor complaints about your behavior will be grounds for termination of your lease. Please see paragraph x, section x of the lease agreement... ."

## Rental Property Fire Safety and Code Inspection

As of March 2007, the city is requiring all single-family and duplex rental units to acquire fire certificates of occupancy. The process will be overseen by the fire inspection division of the newly created Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). Properties will be inspected for code compliance and fire safety and will be issued certificates of occupancy based the results of an inspection score. For more information, refer to [www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi). To make a code- or fire-safety related complaint about a property, call (651) 266-8989.

## Student Relationships

Most students have been decent and respectful neighbors but it's hard to keep up with the yearly changes. So instead of giving a cordial welcome to your new neighbors (ones who likely know very little about the issues you may have had over the years), you find yourself wondering if they'll be quiet, if they'll pick up the yard, and if they'll park in ways that don't violate your own private parking regulations. Remember, it's your neighborhood – and it's the neighborly thing to do to greet new members of your community and to share names and contact numbers. It's a good place to start. If you don't make the effort, it's likely they won't either. It's up to you.

Sometimes a group welcome letter helps. The following is a sample letter that members of one block wrote and gave to new student tenants:

Welcome to the neighborhood,

Your neighbors want to welcome you to the neighborhood. If you lived here last year, welcome back!

We hope you'll grow to feel part of our thriving community, full of all generations and all types of folks. We've chosen this St. Paul neighborhood because of that community feeling – knowing our neighbors and being surrounded by those who value a safe, collaborative and involved neighborhood. We hope you'll join us in taking care of our neighborhood by:

1. Getting to know your neighbors! Many blocks have block captains – get to know them. And feel free to ask your neighbors for advice – from the cheapest garbage hauler, to the best local restaurant and other services, to city resources. And you're always welcome at block parties (like National Night Out in August). Our block captain is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Taking care of the essentials for your property.
  - a. Trash removal is not provided by the city. Every house has to arrange for its own trash removal.
  - b. Garbage haulers don't pick up after you; your neighbors don't want to either. Be mindful of trash on your property, including your front yards, curbs, and alleys.
  - c. In the fall, you'll be contacted to contribute to snowplowing for the alley. (The city doesn't do it.)
  - d. Get the correct parking permits and help make sure any guests abide by the parking restrictions. Call (651) 487-7200 or (651) 266-6200 for more information.
3. Helping to make sure noise is kept to a reasonable level. The city's noise ordinance begins at 10 p.m. We'd appreciate your efforts to respect your neighbors' peace and quiet. Make sure your friends and visitors aren't loud or disruptive. This is especially important in spring, summer and early fall, when windows are open at night. Sound travels more than you may realize. Please think about this in the early morning hours, if you or your guests are visiting on a porch or patio, saying good-byes in front of your house, walking to and from cars, or talking on cell phones.
4. Keeping parties to a minimum and letting your neighbors know ahead of time if you're planning a small party or gathering.

If you're ever faced with a situation you can't control, call the police at 911 or St. Thomas' Public Safety at (651) 962-5100. Remember, tenants are responsible for their guests whether invited or not. If you have questions about your or your landlord's rights and responsibilities, you may contact the St. Thomas neighborhood liaison at (651) 962-6123 or the

St. Thomas Commuter Center at (651) 962-6138. The Commuter Center's Web site address is [www.stthomas.edu/commutercenter](http://www.stthomas.edu/commutercenter). We also hope if we can ever be of help, you'll reach out to us.

Sincerely,

(include names, addresses, and phone numbers)

## Parking: Everyody's Pet Peeve

You live in a city and you understand that public streets are built and maintained with tax dollars, but sometimes it is hard to give up that little piece of city macadam directly in front of your house. We're willing to bet that there are special parking concerns and needs on virtually every St. Paul block. Here is some basic parking information to help you deal with issues on your block.

### COMMONLY ENFORCED ORDINANCES RELATING TO PARKED CARS IN ST. PAUL

1. It is unlawful to park on the street longer than 48 consecutive hours. If you note a car which is parked on your street for more than that length of time, feel free to contact the St. Thomas neighborhood liaison at (651) 962-6123. He can sometimes trace a plate and get immediate action.
2. It is unlawful to park on a boulevard.
3. It is unlawful to park regularly on any unimproved surface.
4. It is unlawful to park in an alleyway within five feet of a driveway or garage or within 20 feet opposite a garage or driveway.
5. It is unlawful to park in a permit zone without the proper permit.

### REPORTING ILLEGALLY PARKED CARS

If you have a problem with an illegally parked car in your neighborhood, you may report it to the St. Paul Police by calling one of the following two numbers:

1. From 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday, call directly to the Surface Parking Unit at (651) 266-5585.
2. At other times call the Non-Emergency Police Command Center at (651) 291-1111.

## RESIDENTIAL PARKING PERMITS

Some streets have special permit restrictions. Here are some rules and basic information to know:

1. In this part of St. Paul, each household is allowed a maximum of four vehicle permits (for placement on a car window) and two visitor permits (a card to be placed on a vehicle dashboard). Visitor permits are not to be used by people residing in the area. All parking permits are only valid in the specific area where they are assigned.
2. Some renters have abused the residential parking permit program. Permits have been sold or given to people not residing in the area to avoid paying St. Thomas parking fees; also, visitor permits have been used by the same vehicle on a daily basis. This is usually due to over-occupancy at a specific property. Some people have even forged permits in an attempt to circumvent the rules.

In addressing these abuses, it is helpful to know that each vehicle permit is assigned to a specific vehicle and property. By tracking these permits, specific issues can be identified. Representatives from the St. Paul Public Works Traffic Engineering division can help in dealing with residential parking permit issues, and can be reached at (651) 266-6200.

## Neighborhood Nuisances

**So you've tried your best** but you have immediate party issues. It's 11:30 p.m. and it's a muggy school night. Your windows are open because you don't have central air, and you can hear party music from across the street. Your kids can't sleep and neither can you. You've already asked politely for a little peace, but that hasn't worked. You don't want to get anyone in trouble, but it is now time to do something more about your problem. Here's a format we suggest you follow for dealing with an immediate disruptive situation:

### WHAT TO DO IN AN IMMEDIATE DISRUPTIVE SITUATION

1. **Dial 911** to report an immediate disturbance to the St. Paul Police. Request a police response. Be clear about the street address of the disturbance, particularly in case of a duplex. Be sure to request that the disturbance be logged in police records. You may choose to remain anonymous if you wish, or request that your name not be used.
2. **Dial (651) 962-5100** to notify St. Thomas' Department of Public Safety

and Parking Services. Identify the property address, state that you've called the police, and request a back-up response. You may also choose to remain anonymous. Bear in mind that Public Safety has no off-campus jurisdiction but, if at all possible, officers have been instructed to drive by, observe the incident, and file a report with the university. (St. Thomas also hires an off-duty St. Paul police officer to patrol the area on weekend nights in the fall and spring; that person can more directly respond to an off campus disturbance). In either case, making this call ensures that the university is notified of the event.

3. Call the landlord and advise him or her of the disturbance. Landlords are required to post a contact name and phone number on the front of a rental property, but hopefully you already have that contact information.

If you need landlord contact information and have Internet access, you can find the taxpayer data by logging on to the Ramsey County property records site at <http://rrinfo.co.ramsey.mn.us/public/characteristic>. You can also call (651) 266-2000 during business hours. You'll need the address of the property to find the owner or taxpayer.

4. Dial (651) 962-6123 and register your complaint with the university's neighborhood liaison. This will also ensure follow up. If it is not a St. Thomas student rental, the liaison will help by contacting the appropriate authority at the appropriate college. The St. Thomas neighborhood liaison may also have landlord contact information.

## Restrictive Covenant: An idea worth considering

**Restrictive Covenants** are private written restrictions placed on land which restrict the future use of that land. Covenants may be placed in the deed by the seller when conveying the land to the buyer. A landowner may also place restrictions against use of his or her land by creating a separate document usually called a Declaration of Restrictive Covenants. Whether the Restrictive Covenants are placed in the deed or created by separate Declaration of Covenants, the covenants are recorded with the county recorder's office in order to provide notice of the covenants to subsequent buyers, owners and occupants of the property.

The Restrictive Covenants generally run with the land and are not dependant upon the continued ownership of the land by the parties to the original deed or by the person that originally placed the covenants on the

land. Successive owners of the land including purchasers under a contract for deed would be bound by the covenants.

Restrictive Covenants which violate federal, state or local law or public policy are not valid or enforceable.

Restrictive Covenants are generally valid for thirty years after the date of the deed or the instrument that created the covenants and can be enforced by the parties that are benefited by the Restrictive Covenant. Benefited Parties are generally defined in the Restrictive Covenant document.

To read an example which is currently used by the University of St. Thomas, refer to [www.wsnac.net/committeedocuments/covenant](http://www.wsnac.net/committeedocuments/covenant).

## The Community Councils

Dear Neighbors:

The City of St. Paul is unique in that it has 17 district councils representing its diverse and numerous neighborhoods. The University of St. Thomas and Macalester College reside in the District 13 and Macalester-Groveland neighborhoods. Both institutions have long-standing working relationships with the Merriam Park and Macalester-Groveland community councils.

Community councils work to engage neighborhood residents, businesses and institutions in citizen participation, addressing issues that are important to their well-being and the neighborhood. Community councils act as a “go-between” to the St. Paul City Council and other city departments such as Planning and Economic Development, Zoning and the St. Paul Police. Community councils address a variety of issues from crime prevention and zoning changes to environmental concerns and neighborhood cleanups.

These councils are governed by an all-volunteer board of directors who live in the neighborhood they represent; therefore, they have an active stake in its mission. The boards conduct meetings once a month that are open to the public.

We invite you to be engaged in citizen participation, whether it is attending a board meeting regarding an issue that is important to you, or saying hello to new students on your block. Thank you for everything you do to make your neighborhood a good place to live.

Warm regards,

*Union Park District Council*

*Macalester-Groveland Community Council*

# Helpful Contact Information

## **Macalester-Groveland Community Council**

320 South Griggs Street  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
(651) 695-4000  
[www.macgrove.org](http://www.macgrove.org)

## **Union Park District Council**

1570 Concordia Avenue, Suite LL 100  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 645-6887  
[www.unionparkdc.org](http://www.unionparkdc.org)

## **Saint Paul City Council Representatives**

### **Pat Harris**

Ward 3  
Room 310-C City Hall  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8630  
Fax: 651-266-8574

Dennis Rosemark, Legislative Aide  
Pattie Kelley, Executive Assistant  
[ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

### **Russ Stark**

Ward 4  
Room 310-D City Hall  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(651) 266-8640  
Fax: (651) 266-8574

Samantha Henningson, Legislative Aide  
Darlyne Morrow, Executive Assistant  
[ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

## **City of Saint Paul and City Council**

[www.ci.stpaul.mn.us](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us)

# Frequently Used Contact Information

## **Ramsey County Property Tax Information**

<http://rrinfo.co.ramsey.mn.us/public/characteristic/>

(651) 266-2000

## **Saint Paul Department of Safety and Inspections**

**Bob Kessler, Director**

8 East Fourth Street, Suite 210

Saint Paul, MN 55101-1024

DSI phone contact: (651) 266-8989, (651) 266-9090

General Information: [www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi)

Housing Complaint: [www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi](http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/dsi)

## **Saint Paul “One Place to Call”**

(651) 266-8989

## **Code Enforcement (housing maintenance requirements)**

(651) 266-1900

## **Fire Inspections & Certificates of Occupancy**

(651) 228-6230

## **Problem Behavior Team**

(651) 266-8989

## **Saint Paul Parking Enforcement**

(651) 266-5585 (Monday – Friday business hours)

(651) 291-1111 (alternate number and for use on weekends)

## **Saint Paul Police Neighborhood Watch Program**

Meredith Voglund, (651) 266-5625

## **Other Neighborhood Resources**

[www.wsnac.net/stpaulinfo](http://www.wsnac.net/stpaulinfo)

## **University of St. Thomas**

John Hershey, Neighborhood Liaison

(651) 962-6123

## **Macalester College**

Jim Hoppe, Dean of Students

(651) 696-6220



UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS

MINNESOTA