



City of Ann Arbor Planning & Development Services

Memorandum

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Brett Lenart, Planning Manager
RE: Fraternity & Sorority Special Exception Use Standards – Proposed Amendments
DATE: August 11, 2017

At the Planning Commission retreat, and subsequent discussions, potential zoning ordinance amendment regarding fraternities and sororities was identified for the upcoming year. This proposed ordinance revision was also included in the FY 2018 Work Program adopted by the Planning Commission in July of 2017.

The proposed amendment evolved from community experience and discussions about the affiliation of fraternities and sororities with the University of Michigan. Specifically, the proposed amendment, through definition, adds a requirement that a fraternity or sorority is affiliated with the University of Michigan, or another postsecondary college or university that operates campus facilities in the City of Ann Arbor.

Similar language is currently included in the Zoning Ordinance through the definition of Student Cooperative Housing (Section 5:1 Definitions):

(57) *Student cooperative housing.* A facility used for housing students who therein largely perform their own household maintenance and meal preparation and who have a vote in the operation, maintenance and management of their household affairs. Such housing is registered with The University of Michigan.

The proposed amendment is as follows:

Section 5:1: Definitions:

(21) ***Fraternity or sorority house.*** A building used by a college fraternity or sorority as a principal place of residence for its members. The fraternity or sorority shall have an affiliation with the University of Michigan, or a postsecondary college or university that operates campus facilities in the City. Affiliation shall be established by recognition or membership of the resident fraternity or sorority in an association or council recognized by the college or university.

This proposed change would not retroactively apply to existing houses in the City, but would be applicable to new fraternity or sorority applications. For reference, six special exception permits have been considered since 2008, for five different sites.

Special exception standards that are currently in place, and are proposed for amendment below would be applicable to new fraternity and sorority applications as follows:

Special exception uses pursuant to section 5:104.

(a) Fraternities, sororities and student cooperatives subject to the following standards:

- 1. A resident manager shall be employed or appointed. For purposes of this section, a resident manager is one who lives on-site, serving in a regular or full-time capacity.*
- 2. A minimum lot size of 8,500 square feet subject to a minimum of 350 square feet of lot area per occupant shall be provided.*
- 3. The floor area of the structure shall exceed 5,000 square feet of usable floor area. Single or 2-family structures containing 5,000 square feet or less at time of adoption of this ordinance may not be converted to fraternities, sororities or student cooperatives.*
- 4. A fraternity, sorority or student cooperative adjacent to a single or 2-family structure shall have a hedge, berm, fence or wall, forming a continuous screen at least 6 feet high between it and the residential units, to be located adjacent to the lot line from the front of the structure to the rear property line, except in required front open space and where restricted by other ordinance provisions. Screening which continues into the required front open space shall be consistent with Chapter 104, Fences.*
- ~~*5. Density increases require a special exception use permit.*~~
- 6. Kitchen facilities, common areas for meeting and social space, or handicap accessibility may be expanded by 10% of the floor area or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less, without securing a special exception use permit if current parking ordinance standards for fraternities, sororities and student cooperatives are met.*
- 6. The maximum number of occupants shall be established by the special exception use, and any increase in occupancy shall require a new special exception use permit.*

If you have any questions about this proposed amendment, or would like additional information, please contact me.