

From: [Judith Strand](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Stouder, Heather](#)
Subject: March 22 agenda item 63785, conditional use 725 Jenifer St
Date: Monday, March 22, 2021 10:00:29 AM

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Plan Commission members,

The request to approve the addition of a sauna at 725 Jenifer St. is of grave concern to us. We believe the staff report needs greater attention to the context and the full meaning of what appears to be a simple backyard request. Activity at 725 directly affects our daily lives.

Our 700 block of Jenifer St. has 10 historic properties in a tight space (about 350 ft of shoreline). With no garages, scant side and front yards, and no air conditioning for some, we live mainly in our backyards and intimately with each other. City life and our personal activity inevitably affect each other - and we think about that. Thus, neighborly communication and choices to respect other people's schedules and lives are essential. In addition to our activity, we have tended to our connected backyards and respected the rules of not adding structures to it for 25+ years as resident homeowners. (The one structure is the historic boathouse at 731 - but otherwise we've planned our narrow yards and gardens to flow into each other without fences or structures.) Providing an environment to keep long term residents on the isthmus is a benefit to all - and the city. It is our life's practice as well as obligation.

In April 2018, the parcel at 723/725 Jenifer was purchased by JKSR properties LLC. It was added to the company's growing list of rental properties, including an Airbnb at 3105

Worthington Ave. The historic single family house closest to the lake at 725 was purchased to provide "a vacation rental on the lake" to be run as "a family business" (per the JKSR Promotional website). A Traditional Residential property occupied by families for decades became the site

of two commercial businesses, Capital Lake House Airbnb and Capital Lake Pontoons. We immediately felt the impact of these enterprises dropped into our block - and with weekend crowds occupying the yard for vacations, reunions, football Saturdays, and lake activity. As expected, people "on holiday" enjoying each other do not follow the evening schedule or protocol of people "at home" going to work and seeking peaceful nights. They are here for a short time without regard to who is around them. From summer 2018 to the present, we have been appealing to those responsible for oversight of Airbnbs in the city. The new ordinance in 2020 helped reduce maximum number at this small 3 bedroom house from 20 in 2018 to the current 8 adults plus children, but such a crowd every weekend through summer and fall affects and exhausts us. (At \$1,600 for 2 nights, group rental - not intimate couples - is the standard.) The concern cited by the city that tourist housing "taken to the extreme" will "affect neighboring property owners, change a neighborhood's character, and limit the stock of affordable housing" is our sad reality. We saw the change. We live it 24/7.

The issue before you is to give approval to the placement of a sauna in the lake setback/backyard of a historic house/725. For us, this issue can't be separated from the Airbnb enterprise and problem. Since the sauna was placed there in 2019, we know it adds to the outdoor activity of the crowds at 725, including late night lake swimming and conversation. (What will happen if it is made available for public use as indicated in another letter?)

Two objections to the application:

1. Allowing an accessory building disregards what has been the practice of neighbors for decades as we respected the rules, each other, and our connected lakefront yards.

2.

The existence of the sauna is used to promote rental of the Airbnb to groups of people seeking “an amazing lakeside experience.” It is marketed on the JKSR websites as an amenity to the rented space. It is not private or quiet. This fact is not stated in the application materials.

A further question is the plan submitted by Julia Steege-Reimann/JKSR Properties LLC appears to indicate there are other proposed additions to the house. If we read this drawing correctly, that expectation is a third concern. (None of us received information about these plans beyond the city posting of the Plan Commission agenda item.)

Finally, there are many details we could relate about what the transition of 725 Jenifer from a family home to an Airbnb has meant to us. That is beyond what’s before you now. Bottomline, to allow the sauna, the Conditional Use Standard #3 has not been meant. It requires that “The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner.” We, hardy city residents, have a 3 year history of impact to draw upon and tell you as long as an Airbnb is in operation at 725 Jenifer, allowing further lakefront parcel development does indeed harm our property value and enjoyment. The two issues cannot be separated. We count on you to hold back further harm by a decision that reflects the city’s concern for Airbnbs and its priority of preserving residential neighborhoods.

We welcome your visit to our homes to see our view of the 725 deck and how readily sound travels, and to understand how intimately and respectfully we live together. Please help us to continue this tradition of respectful community by supporting the maintenance of the historic lakeshore setback. It brings great enjoyment and health to us, and respects an ethic of stewardship that serves the neighborhood.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and our objection to this application.

Sincerely,

Joy Newmann
741 Jenifer St. (since 1990)

Keith Notbohm
743 Jenifer St. (since 1997)

Mary Schneider
743 Jenifer St. (since 1997)

Judith Strand
745 Jenifer St. (since 1992)

Richard Wagner
739 Jenifer St. (since 1980)