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From: Lockaton, Robin D
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 7:36 AM
To: Sarah Ashmore; Planning Admin
Cc: The Mayor; Ward2; PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: RE: Meeting request RE: SISU shelter, public safety

Good morning

Thank you for contacting the Planning Department, I have forwarded this to our Subdivision and Zoning Department.

Thank you Robin Lockaton

Robin Lockaton, Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
City of Oklahoma City
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From: Sarah Ashmore <sarah.ashmore1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 10:57 PM
To: Planning Admin <PlanningAdmin@okc.gov>
Cc: The Mayor <mayor@okc.gov>; Ward2 <ward2@okc.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Meeting request RE: SISU shelter, public safety

Some people who received this message don't often get email from sarah.ashmore1@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Members of the Oklahoma City Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the rezoning request by SISU Youth, Inc. (SPUD-1694) located at 2121 NW 30th St. This facility has had a significant negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods and introduced a large number of public safety issues that are currently unmanaged. In the past two years alone, myself and my neighbors have witnessed and experienced in and around Swatek Park:

- Individuals having sex, including finding used condoms near children's play areas
- Individuals urinating, including the discovery of bottles full of urine in the public park
- Drug use, including finding used syringes and other drug paraphernalia around playground equipment and in the pavilion area
- An individual actively overdosing requiring medical intervention
- Fighting
- Fires being started, fed with lighter fluid, then left unattended
- Individuals listening to profane music at maximum volume and yelling swear words and racial slurs in the park around small children

- Leaving trash everywhere and writing graffiti on playground equipment including swear words
- Threatening parents at Swatek Park with deadly weapons simply for asking them to be respectful in a space shared with small children
- Our neighbors' properties have been broken into and vandalized multiple times
- Another neighbor was intimidated and threatened for asking SISU youth to leave their property, only to have their door kicked in later that same day when the resident was not home

Crime statistics paint a bleak picture of what the facility has done to the area's safety. In 2023, the last year SISU was located at the Church of the Open Arms, there were 234 calls to the church location, including reported assaults, assaults with deadly weapons, armed robbery and rape among other crimes. After SISU vacated that facility in 2024, the number of calls to the church location dropped to 53. In just the first 10 months of 2024, there were 195 calls to the new SISU shelter location, including assaults, assaults with deadly weapons, and larceny among other crimes. Between 2023-2024, there has been a 40% increase in police calls to Swatek Park alone so far this year. This does not include any calls to surrounding properties for things like the large number of break-ins, property damage, stolen property, and other felonious crimes in the blocks surrounding SISU.

The same individuals responsible for these police calls leave the SISU facility, and because they lack transportation, travel by foot to Swatek Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. This includes individuals who have been removed from the SISU facility due to violent behavior or other transgressions. These individuals would otherwise have no reason to be in the neighborhood, however, SISU has told our neighbors repeatedly there is nothing they can do about these individuals once they leave the SISU property. SISU leadership has been dismissive of our concerns over the past several years, doing next to nothing to address public safety and other issues arising directly as a result of SISU Youth Services.

While SISU purports to provide a myriad of services to these individuals, such as job training, education, and active case management, I have seen little evidence of this. A dozen or more SISU youth gather in our park daily where we have observed them drinking alcohol and using drugs at all hours of the day. They occupy Swatek Park for the entire day before returning to SISU to sleep. These youth would be better served by using this time to seek employment, complete education or job training, receive appropriate drug and alcohol treatment, attend counseling or participate in other activities that would lead to permanent housing and an improved quality of life.

It is my understanding SISU is requesting to add multifamily residential and emergency shelter housing, feeding site services and childcare services. I am deeply concerned about the impact expanded services will have on the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the SISU shelter location. SISU's inability to properly manage their existing services leaves me with little confidence about their ability to safely manage expanded services. I'm not only concerned about the impact on my own neighborhood due to increased traffic being driven to the area and exacerbating current public safety issues, but young children potentially attending daycare at this location should not be exposed to this type of behavior any more than my own four year-old.

While we all recognize the need for homeless services, the shelter's "low-barrier" designation comes with many troublesome, and sometimes dangerous, consequences for those of us who call the surrounding neighborhoods home. Many people in our neighborhood, including myself, have young children and we no longer feel safe going to our neighborhood park. There seem to be other metro organizations successfully serving the homeless youth population without these kinds of issues in the surrounding neighborhoods. Philanthropic and government resources would be better spent supporting

and expanding organizations with a track record of successfully improving outcomes for this population without the negative impacts to the surrounding community.

Although we have lived in the Shepherd Historic Neighborhood since 2019, we were never informed of the first proposed rezoning to allow this facility a permanent home in our neighborhood. We were not given the opportunity to provide any input or express our concerns in 2020 when that rezoning plan was approved. And since that time, our neighbors have experienced dismissiveness from SISU leadership when concerns are raised. I sincerely hope you, and our elected City leaders, take these concerns seriously and take action to oppose the expansion of this site.

Sincerely,
Sarah Ashmore