

Johnson, Thad A

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
Ph: 405-297-2515 Email: robin.lockaton@okc.gov



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

Johnson, Thad A

From: Tammy Diaz <jtdiaz02@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 30, 2024 9:21 AM
To: PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: SPUD 1694 for 2121 NW 30th St., OKC, OK

You don't often get email from jtdiaz02@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Oklahoma City Planning Commission
420 West Main St
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Dear Members of the Oklahoma City Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my concern and strong opposition to the rezoning request by Sisu Youth, Inc. (SPUD 1694) for the property located at 2121 NW 30th St. I believe that granting this request would exacerbate the negative impacts that Sisu has already had on our neighborhood since their relocation to 2127 NW 30th St.

Since Sisu's arrival in our neighborhood, there has been a noticeable increase in loitering, littering, and criminal activity, including vandalism and theft. Homeless people are walking up and down my street all day long and I have had people hollering at me when I'm in my front yard. I've seen people sleeping in neighbor's yards during the day. I do not feel safe in my front yard. Our neighborhood has had a lot of homes being renovated in efforts to improve our neighborhood, but safety is a HUGE concern. These issues have created an unsafe environment and have diminished the quality of life for residents. Moreover, the presence of the facility has caused some residents to leave the area, contributing to a decline in the local population and, by extension, property values. I recognize the need for homeless shelters, but the homeless shelters don't belong in a neighborhood.

Expanding the facility without first addressing these ongoing concerns would be a grave mistake. It is essential that the city conduct a thorough analysis of the current impacts on the neighborhood and take the necessary steps to mitigate the negative effects before considering further expansion. Failing to do so risks further deterioration of the neighborhood, which is already facing significant challenges.

I urge the Planning Commission to reconsider this rezoning request until a comprehensive review of the situation is conducted, and a plan is put in place to address the harm that has already been caused.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Tammy Diaz
2205 NW 30th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-625-5684
jtdiaz02@yahoo.com

Johnson, Thad A

From: Lockaton, Robin D
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 3:36 PM
To: Michael Farrell; Planning Admin; The Mayor; Ward2
Cc: PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: RE: Public safety issues in and around Shepherd historic district

Good afternoon

Thank you for contacting the Planning Department, I have forwarded your request to our subdivision and zoning department.

Thank you, Robin Lockaton

Robin Lockaton, Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
City of Oklahoma City
Ph: 405-297-2515 Email: robin.lockaton@okc.gov



From: Michael Farrell <mcfarrell1985@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 3:31 PM
To: Planning Admin <PlanningAdmin@okc.gov>; The Mayor <mayor@okc.gov>; Ward2 <ward2@okc.gov>
Subject: Public safety issues in and around Shepherd historic district

Good afternoon everyone, 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. We have continually reached out to sisu for assistance, have had several meetings with them, where they promise to be good neighbors and then continue to be dismissive of any and all accountability for the actions of the youth that are being attracted to this community by the promise of the resources they provide. If you track the year over year crime rate you will see not that crime itself is on the rise over here, but violent crimes, assaults, robbery, drug and narcotics, motor vehicle theft, weapon law violations are all on the rise. We have families over here. Forced rapes, forced fondling, forced sodomy. I have been pulling the year over year crime statistics as provided by the neighborhood association and if you heat map it, the closer you get to sisu the more crimes there are. SISU has had over 190 calls to their address this year to their address alone, and they a lot of those are violent felonies calls, and they want to expand, when they don't even have a handle on their current situation.

Additionally, their youth spend most of their days walking down to Swatek park, which in itself is not a big issue, but they start drinking sometimes around 9 or 10 am, sometimes smoking weed, and doing other drugs. We have had to call 911 on several occasions because there were youths there overdosing. They listen to loud vulgar music, they are hostile to anyone who approaches them, me and one other dad in the neighborhood have witnessed them pull a knife on someone who sked them to turn their music

down. I We have found multiple syringes in the park after they walk back to sisu, I have collected these as evidence to bring to city council or to SISU should they request to see them. We have spent hours picking up broken glass bottles that they have purposely smashed on the tree there, knowing that it is a park that families would like to bring their kids.

On top of that multiple people have witness them having sex in our park, its not uncommon to find used condoms over by the pavilion, they use the bathroom in the park, they leave trash scattered all over the place, our neighborhood has to go over constantly to clean it up. There are countless examples of services that work. Sisu, is not one of those. They are letting these youth down, these kids should be in school or some kind of vocational job training, its not serving them at all sitting in the park all day, they are failing the community as the crime rate is skyrocketing and it is becoming a huge public safety issue.

SiSU should not be allowed to expand until they can show that they are successfully getting kids off the streets and into some kind of training and or permanent housing and is willing to work with the neighborhood to help reduce the crime.

Thank you
Chaz Farrell

Johnson, Thad A

From: Sloane Hogan <ohheyitssloane@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2024 7:20 AM
To: PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: SPUD-1694

You don't often get email from ohheyitssloane@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

I am a resident of the Shepherd Historic Neighborhood, and I am sending this message to express my concerns regarding SPUD-1694.

In the last year, our neighborhood has experienced a significant increase in safety and security issues, and many of the issues seem to stem from SISU. Specifically regarding our neighborhood park, where there has been a noticeable increase in calls to police. We have found needles, condoms, and human waste on the playground facilities. I have young children and we used to frequent the park with them. But now, with numerous reports of sexual misconduct, violence, and drug use, we no longer feel safe taking our children there. Our neighborhood has done many things to address these issues, and it still feels nothing has changed. The incidents at the park have often involved SISU youth.

While I feel everyone should be welcome at the park, this should extend to ALL people, INCLUDING children.

I want SISU to succeed, but I feel these problems need to be specifically addressed before any expansion begins. I would like to see better accountability and oversight on SISU as they address the concerns of the neighborhood and those they serve.

Thank you for addressing these concerns at the meeting on Dec 12th

Sloane Hogan
Resident 73107

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Sloane Hogan
<https://honestead.com/>

Oklahoma City Planning Commission
420 West Main St
Oklahoma City, OK, 73102

December 2, 2024

Dear Members of the Oklahoma City Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my strong and urgent **opposition** to the rezoning request by Sisu Youth, Inc. (SPUD-1694) for the property located at 2121 NW 30th St. Given the significant negative impact that Sisu has already had on our neighborhood since their relocation to 2127 NW 30th St., I strongly urge the Planning Commission to either deny or, at the very least, postpone a decision on this request until reasonable and thorough research is conducted on the detrimental effects this facility has had on the surrounding community.

Since Sisu's arrival, our neighborhood has experienced an increase in **loitering, littering, criminal activity (including vandalism and theft), and a general decline in safety**. These issues have led to property values dropping, and, in some cases, residents have chosen to leave the area due to the unsafe and deteriorating conditions. The presence of this facility is undeniably harming the community, and expanding it without addressing these concerns is not only irresponsible, but also unfair to the residents who are bearing the brunt of these impacts.

In addition to the issues surrounding Sisu's facility, I am particularly concerned about the growing presence of homeless youth in **Swatek Park**. This once peaceful and safe space for families, including myself, has increasingly become a place where individuals associated with the facility gather, often making it feel unsafe to visit. I can no longer take my grandchildren there without feeling uncomfortable and worried for their safety. The park is an important part of our neighborhood, and the loitering and new safety concerns only exacerbate the negative impact of Sisu's presence in our community.

It is essential that the Planning Commission thoroughly investigates the current situation and fully understands the consequences of allowing this facility to expand. Simply giving Sisu a "rubber stamp" approval on their expansion without addressing the ongoing issues is unacceptable. The Commission has a responsibility to ensure that decisions made today do not result in long-term harm to the neighborhood and its residents.

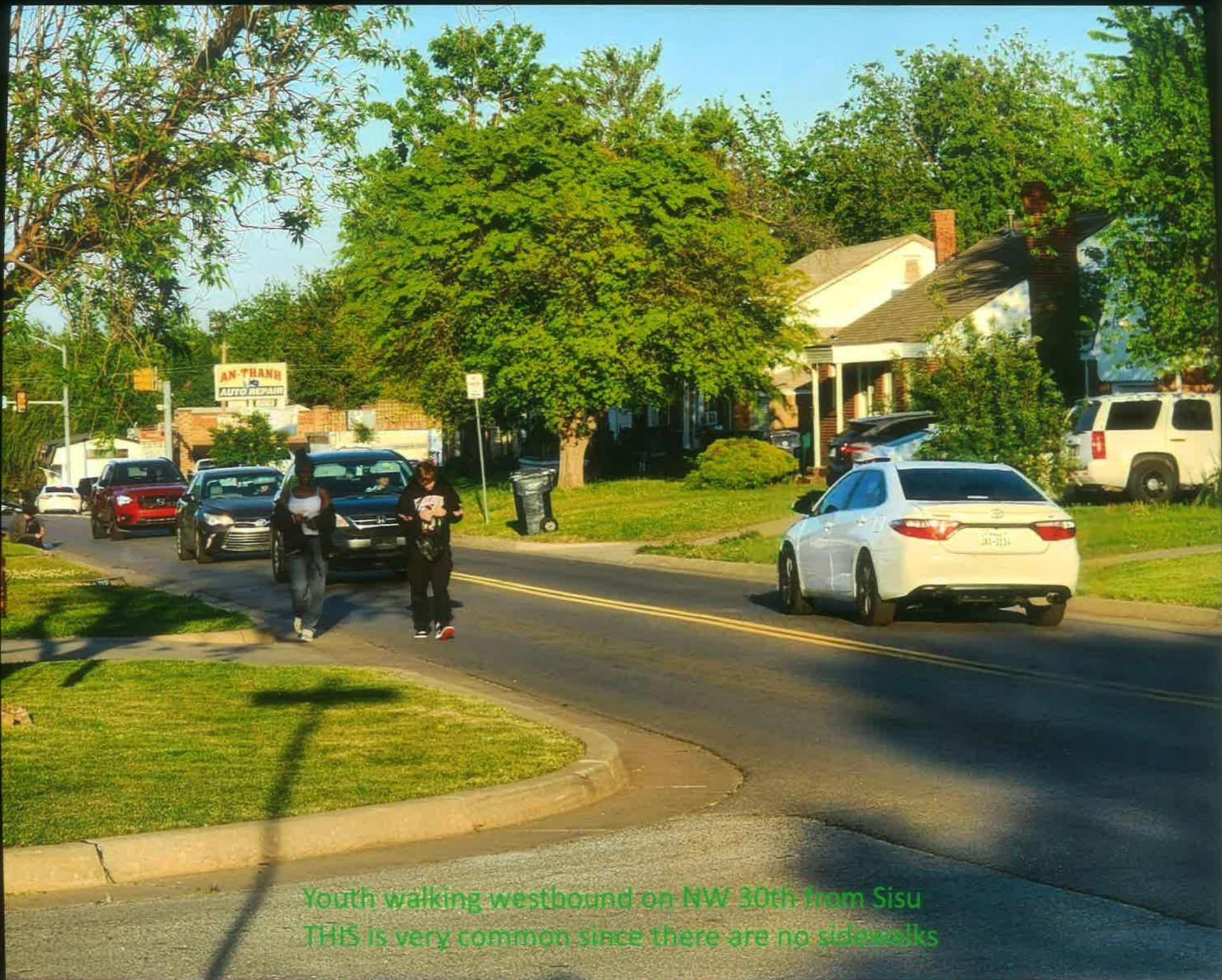
Therefore, I urge you to **deny the rezoning request** or, at the very least, postpone any decision until a comprehensive review of the facility's impact is conducted. Only with a full understanding of the current situation can the Commission make an informed, responsible decision that truly serves the best interests of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I trust that you will act in the best interest of the neighborhood and prioritize the safety and well-being of its residents in your decision.

I have included pictures that I have taken from my home vantage point of the loitering, litter, and youth pedestrian traffic along NW 30th St.

Sincerely,

Jim and Cindy Dunlop
2201 NW 30th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73112



Youth walking westbound on NW 30th from Sisu
THIS is very common since there are no sidewalks

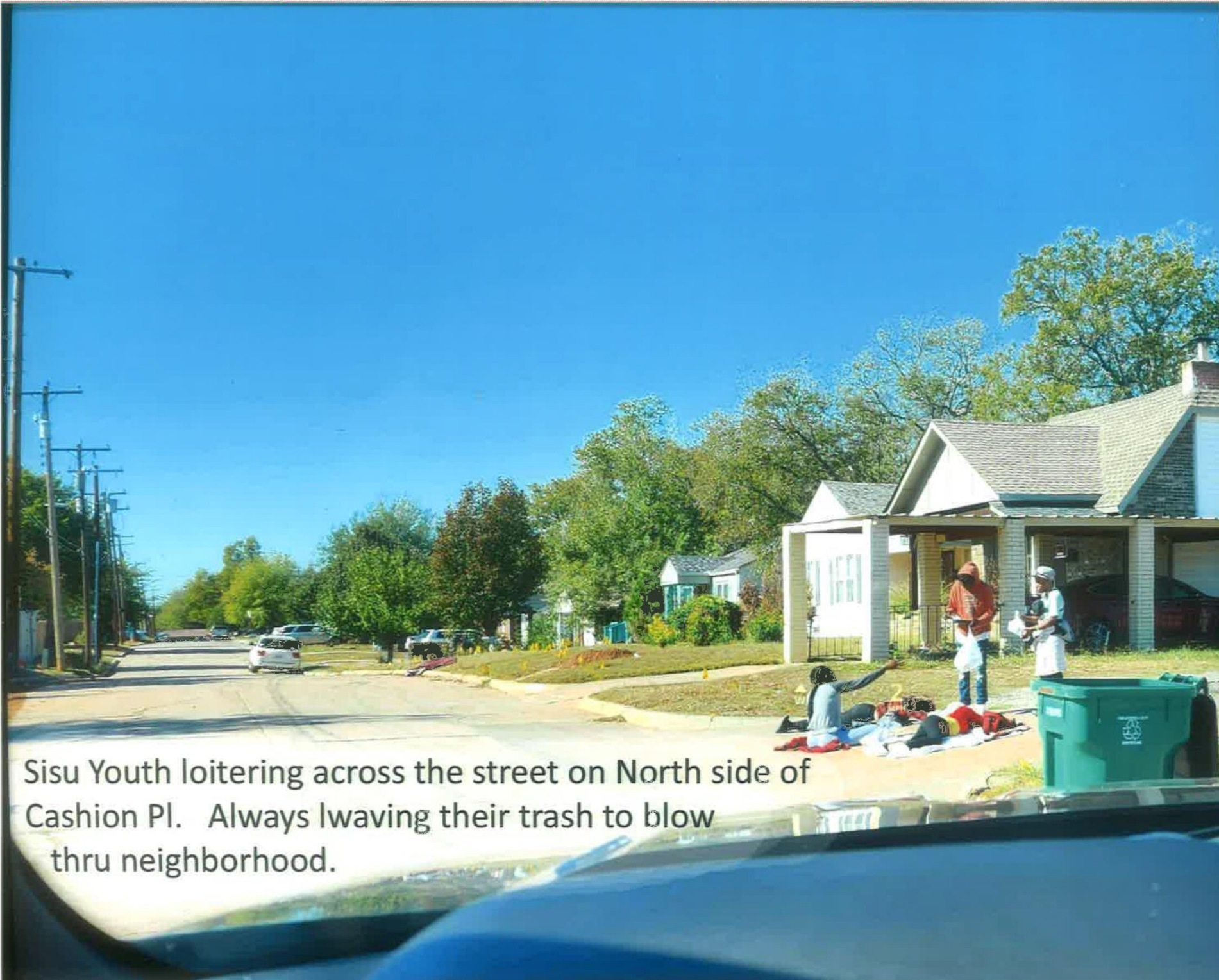


Barnes and Cashion Pl

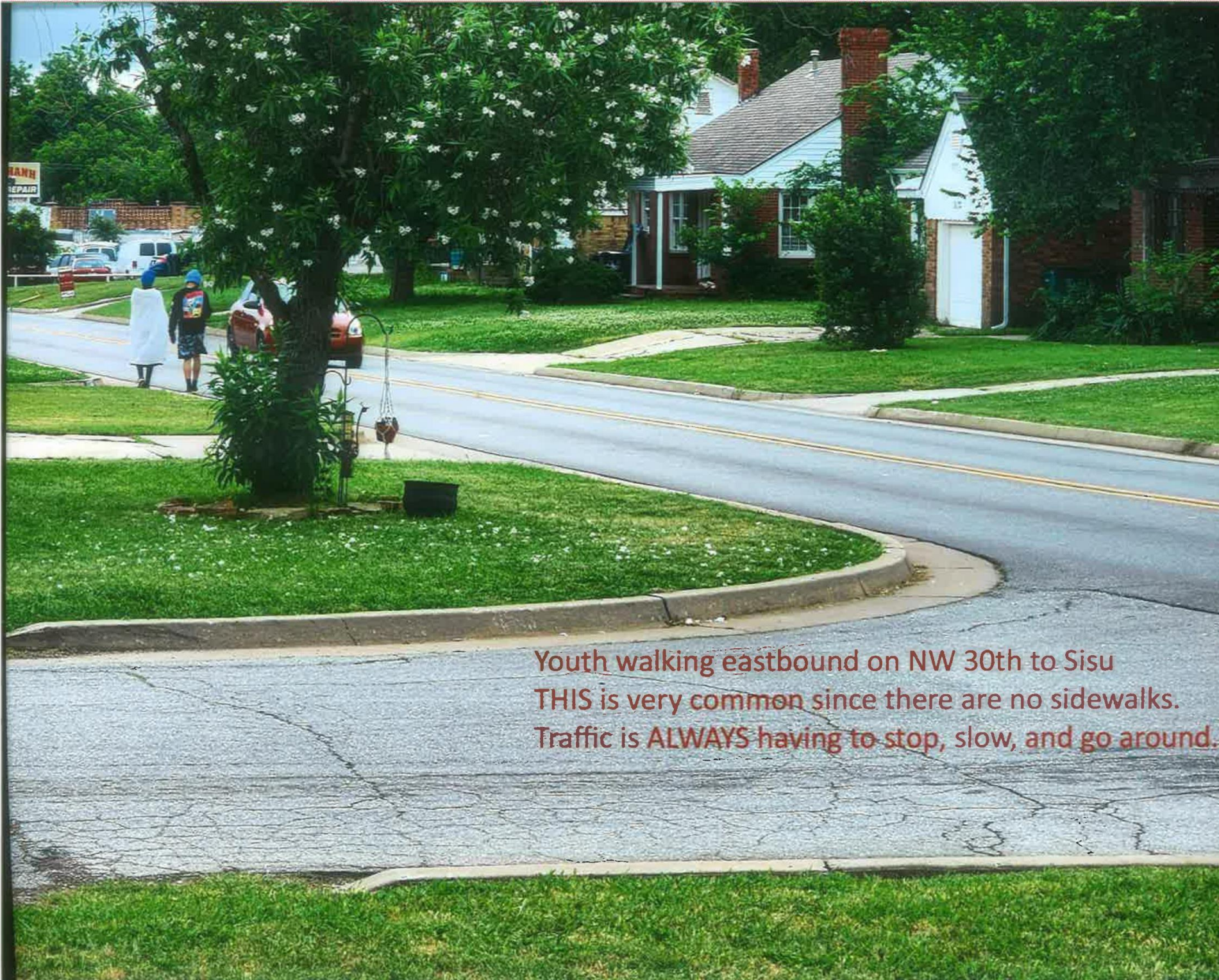








Sisu Youth loitering across the street on North side of
Cashion Pl. Always l waving their trash to blow
thru neighborhood.



Youth walking eastbound on NW 30th to Sisu
THIS is very common since there are no sidewalks.
Traffic is ALWAYS having to stop, slow, and go around.

Vacant Lot loitering Cashion Pl and Barnes





Youth walking westbound on both sides of NW 30th from Sisu
Causes constant traffic issues.



Sisu Youth loitering in vacant lot SE corner of
Cashion Pl and Barnes.

Johnson, Thad A

From: Johnson, Thad A
Sent: Thursday, December 19, 2024 12:55 PM
To: Johnson, Thad A
Subject: FW: Meeting with SISU

From: Michael Farrell <mcfarrell1985@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 12:53 PM
To: Ward2 <ward2@okc.gov>; The Mayor <mayor@okc.gov>; Planning Admin <PlanningAdmin@okc.gov>; janispowers <janispowers@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: Meeting with SISU

Some people who received this message don't often get email from mcfarrell1985@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon City Council person Cooper, planning committee, Mayor Holt. Thank you for receiving my email and hoping for a speedy response. I represent a growing number of the neighbors in the Shepherd Historic District, Sequoyah, and Military Park neighborhoods, we are a committee on public safety and crime occurring in and around our area. I want to start off by saying that it is possible to care about the homeless and still care about the safety and wellbeing of our neighborhood. There doesn't have to be an us versus them mentality. But it does feel like the wellbeing and safety of our neighborhood is taking a backseat to the optics and false information that SISU is giving out. I want to say that we have given SISU over a week now to respond with their proposed solutions and we have yet to hear anything, but we have had more car break-ins, we have had more auto thefts, there have been 2 fires left unattended in our park, and one of the neighbors kids found another syringe in the park after the SISU kids left for their lunch and headed back over to SISU. I have spent the last week going through the neighborhood alliance crime states for the last 4 years line by line for Shepherd and Sequoyah. It is a complete contradiction to what SISU is reporting. The number of crimes occurring in our neighborhoods have gone up every year. In 2020 there were less than 200 Reported crimes according to the neighborhood alliance. in 2023 there have been over 320, This year as of October there have been over 270 and the focal point of these crimes are around SISU, most of them occurring in the 2100 and 2200 block, of 29th, 30th, Cashion, 31st, and 32nd, between Youngs and Pennsylvania. Again the following statistics are pulled directly from the neighborhood alliance crime stats website. for the past 3years and 10 months.

- 144 Destruction of property and vandalism
- 134 Burglary and breaking and entering
- 32 intimidations
- 95 Simple Assault
- 45 Aggravated assaults
- 135 thefts from motor vehicles
- 54 motor vehicle thefts
- 20 robberies
- the night of the meeting there was auto theft, and there was a stolen ar driven into someone's garage on 29th st.

These are just some of the crimes that occur over here. In 2020 there were less than 200 crimes, 2023 there were over 320 crimes, this year in our neighborhoods, as of October there were over 270 crimes based off the neighborhood alliance stats.

One thing I don't know that if you heard in the meeting that raised a huge red flag is when they said these kids are just going to be there, and someone said we have witnessed these kids pull a knife on a 70 year old woman asking them to turn their music down, and a member of their staff said **"That is just going to happen"** they said that, those are their exact words, like them pulling a knife on someone is just a normal thing that we have to live with. SISU does not have any control and they don't care what's going on. They act like they do when eyes are on them, but as soon as the attention and vigilance wane, they go back to their apathetic state.

Another thing that we want to address, this wasn't our first neighborhood meeting with SISU like this. Last year we had 3 meetings with them. When a client of SISU was expelled, took up residence in a vacant house in Military Park, and when confronted pulled a gun on a resident, When we spoke about this at the meeting Rachel Bradley told us " He pulled the gun on me to" But her story has since changed and that has become a misconception. But I have a dozen people that can confirm that she told us in 2023 that he pulled a gun on her, and they kicked him out. He is still on the streets around our neighborhood.

We don't want them to expand at all because more foot traffic will lead to more crime in our area. There needs to be extensive studies done about crime in the area and reports need to be made available to everyone. Go and talk to all the small businesses around SISU. The doctor's office on Cashion and Penn caught a SISU kid breaking into his car, the Tailor has boarded up windows because SISU kept busting them out. The Liquor store has lots of issues with them. The auto shop across from the church of open arms. Just talk to people come in to our community and talk to people. They are a threat to this area and the city needs to step in and make sure they are doing their part to correct this before any kind of growth can occur. You witnessed it at the meeting that the community as a whole is not happy.

We shouldn't have to feel unsafe in our own neighborhoods, it feels like you are treating us as second rate citizens. Acting like our safety doesn't matter, like our kids safety doesn't matter to you.

You want solutions, here is what I propose

Put some barriers in place

-Drug and alcohol testing- if they test positive for drugs and alcohol send them for treatment or to other facilities not in a residential neighborhood.

-Require some kind of program they have to participate in, you can't force them to do anything but kids that age need structure, giving them free rein results in them committing crimes and self harm like drug use.

-If SISU wants to expand, have them expand at another location and provide transportation to that location. They want to build classrooms but they couldn't even tell us how many youths are participating in these optional educational programs.

-Provide additional around the clock security for the entire area, they are bringing in the foot traffic they need to be the ones policing it to make sure it is safe for everyone

-With the number of violent crimes happening at and around the facility, no one with a small child needs to be anywhere near this campus. They need to find another place for their 6 unit micro apartments. We have seen them pull guns on people. We have seen them pull knives on people just for asking them to turn their music down. We know they are using drugs. No child should be subject to areas where these things are happening.

We need help, the solution is not to expand, at least not without addressing the current issues that are going on in this area. City Council Cooper, Mayor Holt, I beg of you, for the safety of my kids, my neighbors kids, my neighbors, the homeless that these SISU kids are assaulting and seeking protection against to please treat the citizens of this neighborhood with more respect. We didn't put a low barrier shelter here the city did, and now the city is doing next to nothing to help us. There needs to be some accountability for them bringing all this crime into our neighborhood because it wasn't like this before.

This spud can not be approved, we gave them their opportunity and they let this community down. they promised to be a good neighbor but after years of emailing them, calling them, texting them. Asking them for help and then turning a blind eye to us. We hope that you will stand up for us and vote no on this expansion and start holding them accountable for all the breaking and entering, and all the auto thefts and assaults that their foot traffic that they are bringing into this neighborhood.

November 26, 2024

To whom it may concern,

There is news of the SISU Youth Program to expand in the neighborhood. This letter is written to share ongoing concerns for this program. The hope is that someone will pay attention.

There is the utmost empathy for anyone who is homeless. However, being homeless does not give a person the freedom to infringe upon others' rights or belongings.

The neighborhoods surrounding the SISU Shelter were once quiet, friendly, and well, people were neighborly. There was a safe feeling. Neighbors would walk, walk their dogs, kids and grandkids played outside. These neighborhoods and those surrounding the SISU Shelter no longer feel safe and the quiet is gone.

There are continued complaints of the yelling, screaming and chaos in the streets. Over the summer, one youth was stabbed in the SISU parking lot. A backpack was found with a gun in it. The ambulance and police presence are still frequent and has also spread to other areas of the neighborhood.

These young men and women have been urinating on privacy fences of homes and in the corner of their own building in broad daylight. Property has been stolen, forcing people to have to replace what was taken. Trash must be picked up daily and it is not being picked up by SISU employees or the homeless youth they claim to be helping. The homeowners have worked hard for what they have and keeping things looking nice. They should not have to pick up garbage they did not create.

Neighbors witnessed large rocks being placed at the end of the driveways. They had to be moved so homeowners could park their cars. Folks are fearful of leaving their cars parked in the street. They fear their cars will be damaged or broken into by those who wander the streets. This fear did not exist before SISU moved into the neighborhood.

Homeowners are not even comfortable sitting on their front porch to enjoy a nice day out. Even enjoying a day in the back yard, grilling out, working in the garden or playing with kids or their dogs is interrupted with chaos from these youth.

The alley between one block to another had a barrier put up to keep them from camping in the alley. The homeowners are responsible for the upkeep of the alley. SISU youth have torn it down a couple of times. They camp, urinate, defecate and leave their trash behind. One neighbor went in the alley to clean up and replace the barrier. He discovered two

backpacks left behind. Not knowing if they were going to return, he called the police out. He did not want to be accused of stealing anything. The police not only showed up, but the officer also stayed until the barrier was completed. If the youth returned, the officer was present so no confrontation would develop. He understood well what the neighborhood was dealing with and was only happy to provide the support.

SISU is only a place for these young people to sleep. They let them in the building early in the evening and put them out in the morning regardless of the weather conditions. It used to be that most of them just hung out in the parking lot. Some of them still do, however, many of them now hang out at the local park. This park is a place for parents and grandparents to take their children to play. The nearby neighbors as well as surrounding neighbors now fear for their and the children's safety.

These youth are resourceful at getting drugs, alcohol, tobacco. They also have no problem displaying the use in public. The neighborhood and park smell of marijuana daily. The police are now frequently being called to the park for many of the same things they have continuously been called out for at the SISU campus. The fighting, yelling, drugs and drinking. There is absolutely no supervision once they leave SISU campus. The shelter was opened to provide overnight housing, but also (as their website states) offers opportunities for education, mental health care, life skills and employment. There seems to be no evidence of this whatsoever.

So, where does it end? SISU has been in the news, complaints and letters have been sent to appropriate agencies, including SISU. Does a homeowner in the neighborhood need to be hurt by a member of SISU youth before anything is done? There are many shelters in the city. SISU is in the middle of a neighborhood. Other shelters are not. I am sure that if a survey went out to all the neighboring homes, all would agree that this shelter should be relocated. The constant disrespect of property, privacy, and indecent human nature is intolerable.

A person should not fear living in a home they paid for, worked hard to keep, reared their family in, and would like to continue to enjoy.

Expanding the SISU program is not welcoming news. The concerns like many of the ones shared will only grow. The neighboring homeowners would like their neighborhood back. They would like life to return to some sense of normalcy and not only peace, but peace of mind restored.

Sincerely,

Concerned Homeowner

Aparecida Smith

Johnson, Thad A

From: Lockaton, Robin D
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 1:53 PM
To: Jennifer Floan; Planning Admin
Cc: The Mayor; Ward2; PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: RE: SPUD1694 SISU Youth Services

Good afternoon

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

Thank you Robin Lockaton

Robin Lockaton, Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
City of Oklahoma City
Ph: 405-297-2515 Email: robin.lockaton@okc.gov



From: Jennifer Floan <jfloan@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 1:44 PM
To: Planning Admin <PlanningAdmin@okc.gov>
Cc: The Mayor <mayor@okc.gov>; Ward2 <ward2@okc.gov>
Subject: SPUD1694 SISU Youth Services

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

Good afternoon Planning Commissioners,

I'm reaching out as a local neighbor to the SISU Youth Services organization located off of NW 30th St. I see that there is an upcoming Planning Commission and SISU has submitted a SPUD for approval. I want to make you all aware of what has been going on in the local community that surrounds SISU, because if this SPUD is approved as is, it could very potentially increase the negative outcome the neighborhoods surrounding Swatek Park have been experiencing since SISU has expanded services. Over the past couple of years SISU seems to have reduced efforts to provide the homeless youth that reside at their facility in the evenings the care and mentorship they need, outside of providing them a nightly bed to sleep in and some clothing, personal items, and a meal.

I make this statement, because many of the youth that stay there in the evenings are not being provided the resources they need to end their cycle of homelessness. This has been made evident to the surrounding neighborhoods, because many of the youth in their care have been caught during the day breaking into vehicles and homes, but lately they have also been hanging out at Swatek Park that is a block away from the SISU shelter. Hanging out at the park in itself is not an issue and they are welcome to be at the park, but where the community is having an issue with this is that the SISU youth have been leaving their trash and personal items scattered around the pavilion, partaking in drinking and drugs in the park, and being generally disrespectful and threatening to locals that frequent the park. Pictures have been taken of needles that have been found lying around playground equipment, with one little girl digging in the playground mulch and finding a needle that had been buried, and empty alcohol containers laying around, most of the time within a few feet of a trash can. One member of the local neighborhood approached the SISU youth to turn down their music at the park and a

knife was pulled on her. When I take my toddler to go play, we frequently smell cigarettes and weed from the playground equipment a few feet from the pavilion they hang out under and I have caught youth smoking weed in the tube slide. A couple of weeks ago, one of the neighbors contacted SISU about some 13 of their youth hanging out at the park and drinking alcohol. The SISU security guard informed the neighbor not to approach them, because one of the youth had a hand gun.

The local neighbors have been reaching out to SISU to try and work with them to help resolve the issues we have been experiencing in the area, but SISU has responded by stating that the youth are not their responsibility during the day and that it is fully on the neighborhoods/local community to deal with the increased criminal activity associated with the youth. I disagree with their response, because most of us in the neighborhood/local community are not case managers, social workers, or counselors that have the experience or trained skill set to help provide these youth with drug and alcohol rehabilitation or help them develop skill sets to find employment in the future, all of which SISU states they are capable of doing, which is why people trust to donate and support them. This is why I state that SISU has reduced their efforts in helping to youth in their facility end the cycle of homelessness.

I and many of my neighbors want the SISU youth to be successful in getting out of homelessness, but many of us have become jaded with the lack of responsibility that SISU takes in actually supporting and assisting this vulnerable population. I believe you have a right to know how this organization is negatively affecting the community around them and the lack of assistance they are providing the population they are to be serving and requesting to expand services to. What we as the surrounding community would like to see as a step to ensuring that the youth seeking assistance are met with the necessary resources is to remove the low barrier standard and make it a transitional facility until SISU has the staff, resources, and a well organized transitional program that would allow for a low-barrier shelter to operate and provide the youth that stay in the facility with an opportunity to move into the transitional facility. We would also like to see the age limit to stay at the facility be capped at 20 years of age. Currently they allow youth 15-22 years of age to stay at the night shelter and youth 23-24 years of age are allowed to utilize the daytime community center. I believe these steps would streamline funding to the homeless youth that are working to get out of homelessness and it would focus funding on the youth that are still in school or recently graduated from school, instead of perpetuating homelessness with a group that is using it as a means for a meal and bed, but have no intention of ending their drug/alcohol abuse and/or criminal activity in the surrounding neighborhoods. If SPUD 1694 is approved by the City Council without any changes to the current operations at SISU, those of us that reside in the area are concerned and fearful that what has already been taking place is going to only get worse, because we will see an increase in more unhoused youth in the area that are not being provided proper guidance and assistance by SISU Youth Services.

I also want to provide some of the crime rates from the past two years from the SISU facilities and Swatek Park. One of my neighbors requested this data from the OKC Police Department. In 2023, SISU was located a few doors away from their current location at the Church of the Open Arms on N Penn Ave. In January of this year they relocated to their current location on NW 30th St, which is why you will see both Church of the Open Arms and NW 30th St data listed under 2024. My neighbor requested for the records of all the different types of phone calls that were placed in and to both locations for 2023 and 2024 and for all calls to and from Swatek Park. While we have the full year's worth of data for 2023, 2024 is only 10 months of data (January - October). Total calls to SISU and Swatek in 2023 were 265 and so far the total calls for 2024 are 299. This is over a 10% increase in calls to the Police Department and 2024 still has two more months of data to add into the total. This data doesn't include any calls to locations in the surrounding neighborhoods or local businesses and doesn't include calls to the Fire Department or EMSA, which are also quite frequent. Below is a breakdown of the types of calls made to and from the SISU locations for 2023 and 2024.

	2023 (Full Year)	2024 (Jan - Oct data)	
Types of Calls	SISU - Church of the Open Arms	Church of the Open Arms post SISU	SISU - NW 30th St
Disturbances	26	9	40
Assault	13	0	8
Domestic Violence	7	2	6
Assault w/ a Deadly Weapon	3	1	3
Larceny	2	0	10
Burglary	1	0	0
Rape	2	0	0
Armed Robbery	1	0	0

Robbery by Fear & Force	1	0	1
Misc Calls	178	41	127
Total Calls	234	53	195
Total Calls to Swatek Park	31	51	

Thank you for your time in hearing out the situation that the local community is dealing with around SISU Youth Services. I have attached two separate news articles below, one from May and one from this November, and I also have attached photos of what Swatek Park looks like on a regular basis, with one of them showing a needle that was left behind in the park a few weeks ago and another that was found and collected last night.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Floan-Cao
jfloan@yahoo.com

<https://www.okcfox.com/news/local/theres-been-daily-issues-okc-resident-raises-concerns-about-homeless-shelter-oklahoma-city-sisu-youth-services-david-holt-robert-lange-david-holt->
<https://www.okcfox.com/news/local/residents-voice-safety-concerns-over-youth-shelter-in-oklahoma-city-neighborhood>

Johnson, Thad A

From: Lockaton, Robin D
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 1:31 PM
To: laura vander windt; Planning Admin; The Mayor; Ward2; janispowers
Cc: PL, Subdivision and Zoning
Subject: RE: SISU Youth Services SPUD-1694

Thank you for contacting the Planning Department, I am including our Subdivision and Zoning Department on this email to assist.

Thank you Robin

Robin Lockaton, Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
City of Oklahoma City
Ph: 405-297-2515 Email: robin.lockaton@okc.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: laura vander windt <ljvwindt@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2024 1:27 PM
To: Planning Admin <PlanningAdmin@okc.gov>; The Mayor <mayor@okc.gov>; Ward2 <ward2@okc.gov>; janispowers <janispowers@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: SISU Youth Services SPUD-1694

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from ljvwindt@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I write today as a local neighbor to the SISU Youth Services organization, a low barrier shelter, located at 2129 NW 30th Street. As you are aware, SISU has submitted SPUD-1694 to the Planning Commission for approval. I have significant concerns with this proposal as outlined in this letter.

The SISU organization had its beginning 10 years ago as a ministry in the basement of a local church at 3131 North Pennsylvania Avenue. In 2020 they acquired the current building and campus. At that time, the local community were informed via a NEXTDOOR social media post of this development. We were asked to support SISU and its mission and with that small amount of information we did so in good faith.

Over the past three years, it has become painfully apparent that SISU is not fulfilling its mission to the vulnerable population that it seeks to serve. Apart from a bed in which to sleep, personal items and meals, these youth are not receiving services to lift them out of the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction and other issues to help develop skills and to find employment or complete their education. There may be many reasons for this, one of which is that the institution is in its formative years and does not have institutional knowledge on which to draw.

These statements are supported by the activity that is seen in Swatek Park daily. During the hours that SISU closes its doors (9am-5pm daily) groups of youth gather in Swatek Park which is located a block from the SISU

shelter. Gathering in a city park is not the issue, but that behaviors and activities perpetuated by the SISU clients have become intractable problems for neighborhood residents surrounding Swatek Park. The park is used every day of the week for hours as a gathering place by SISU clients. They occupy the pavilion, playground equipment, and exercise equipment every day. I have observed fights, drinking from glass bottles, drug use, smoking weed and tobacco, sexual activity, arrests, disorderly conduct, overnight sleeping and large amounts of trash including drug paraphernalia, condoms, shattered glass, glass shards, blankets, household goods, ottomans, shelving, grocery carts, food wrappers and discarded food.

Over the years, the surrounding neighborhoods have taken pride in Swatek Park and worked to maintain and improve it. We were recipients of an Annis Boys trust grant for 25 new trees and new playground and exercise equipment and a walking trail were part of the GO Bonds. The park has been a place for recreation, neighborhood gatherings, family celebrations and a beautiful outdoor space for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The low barrier status of the SISU shelter and its clients occupying the park every day makes neighborhood residents wary of approaching the park as SISU clients are not required to be sober or drug free. Most residents are not trained as counselors or trauma specialists. Sadly, most residents avoid the park altogether and the above mentioned activities have come to a halt. It is simply no longer a family-friendly welcoming space. The behavior that is allowed at Swatek Park violates the city's own mission statement for its parks. Many calls have been placed to the OKCPD, Fire Department, and Actions Center over the past three years becoming a drain on already strained city resources.

My comments thus far have been centered on the use of Swatek Park by SISU clients as I live across from the park, but there are many other examples of rising crime rates in the area as experienced by local business owners and homeowners in Shepherd Historic District and Sequoyah neighborhoods and along North Pennsylvania Avenue. The spike crime stats is telling and alarming. This historic area of our city is now at risk as there are ripple effects from these negative impacts that inhibit growth and development and beautification. As has been explained to me over the decades that I've lived the inner city and been involved in neighborhood leadership and volunteerism, the neighborhoods and their residents are the backbone of this great city. It is essential that the well-being of those neighborhoods and residents be protected and it cannot be overlooked in this attempt to address the problem of homelessness. Both can be served. We are asking you to listen to your residents.

What responsibility does SISU bear in all of this? Residents of the surrounding neighborhoods have met with SISU leadership, placed calls and asked for their assistance with some of these troubling issues. The response from SISU leadership is that they are not responsible for their clients when they are outside of their building. This may be the letter of the law, but it is simply not an acceptable or ethical answer to a community asking for accountability and assistance dealing with such problems. As mentioned above, when the SISU building project was presented to the neighborhood via social media, we were asked to support it. We have done so but have been impacted so negatively by their policies, Now we ask to for changes to the organization not an expansion of services as outlined in SPUD-1694. Being a good neighbor goes both ways. SISU has failed to listen and they have not been a good neighbor, to put it bluntly.

As SPUD-1694 seeks to expand SISUs services and facilities, and with the organization's track record with the population it serves and the community in which it resides clearly outlined, this is highly inadvisable. The city council and planning commission need to pause, take a hard look, and reflect very seriously on this decision. Both entities have voted unanimously in support of the current building and the funding for the SISU organization and they bear a great responsibility to these youth and the residents of these neighborhoods. I understand the need for services for our vulnerable population as I have lived in the area for over 30 years and in my own work and vocation seek daily to serve the common good. I do not make any of these remarks lightly and realize the gravity of the situation.

We all want SISU clients to receive the necessary resources to be on a successful path to stability and a full life. To help achieve this, we ask that the organization revisit and clarify several aspects of its stated mission and current operations. The current age range (15-24) presents challenges. The age served should be lowered to minors and therefore some of the problems associated with mixing adults and minors could be avoided both inside and outside the shelter. There are successful organizations providing services for young adults. Require more strict entry and participation requirements and review the current low barrier status to discourage those who are using the shelter to continue a downward spiral. Partner with established and successful organizations to aid in lifting individuals out of homelessness. Establish an independent governing body to make recommendations beneficial to all entities and encourage accountability and provide data on outcomes and effectiveness in combatting homelessness. The lack of experience and the rapid expansion from the church basement to today's facility has produced unintended consequences and collateral damage along the way. This is an organization in need of experienced, skilled advisors and mentors.

I ask that SPUD-1694 be denied until SISU Youth Services operations demonstrate a higher level of commitment and accountability to the clients they serve and the community in which they reside. Thank you for your time in reading what your residents are experiencing regarding SISU Youth Services.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura vander Windt