

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing regarding the nuisance abatement matter concerning my property, 844 Stryker Avenue. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend today's hearing. The hearings and telephone calls related to this matter have all been scheduled during the workday, when I am unable to participate. I therefore respectfully ask that this letter and the attached photographs be considered as my statement to the Council.

I want to be very clear that I am not neglecting my property. I have spent many hours amounting to days and weeks working on my yard and boulevard, and I am actively trying to create an attractive, pollinator friendly, and environmentally beneficial space. I've included photographs that I believe make it quite apparent that this is a property being actively cared for - not a property that has simply been abandoned or neglected.

The original complaint concerned tall grass and weeds allegedly exceeding eight inches in height. In response, I have spent many hours removing weeds from the boulevard and trimming saplings and other growth along my fence line that could obstruct the sidewalk. I have made a substantial effort to address the issue that was originally brought to the City's attention.

What remains is part of a larger landscaping project. I am using cardboard and plastic, held down with stones, as part of an occultation process to suppress invasive plants and improve the soil over time, so that I can continue planting the Wolly Thyme ground cover that I began planting last year. (Thyme plugs get pricey quickly, so I have not been able to plant the whole boulevard at once.) I also have some stones placed in the boulevard to create a path. These are not materials that have been dumped or abandoned on the property; they are being used intentionally as part of ongoing landscaping work.

One of the primary reasons this project is taking time is that I am fighting a significant infestation of creeping bellflower. Creeping bellflower is highly invasive and extremely difficult to eradicate once established. Removing it responsibly requires repeated work over time rather than simply cutting everything down and starting over. I am trying to improve the property in a way that is sustainable and beneficial rather than repeatedly removing vegetation without addressing the underlying problem.

I have also been told that I am not permitted to have a circle of rocks around my trees. I am having difficulty understanding how this particular landscaping feature is being treated as an obstruction when stone, brick, and other forms of tree edging and landscaping are common throughout the city. For example, similar landscaping can be seen at 825 St. Clair

Avenue, 857 Lincoln Avenue, and at multiple properties near the intersection of Goodrich Avenue and Victoria Street. I am not raising these properties to suggest that someone else's potential code violation makes another's permissible. Rather, I am asking for clarification about what specifically makes the landscaping on my boulevard unacceptable and why ordinary landscaping treatments appear to be treated differently from property to property.

The ordinance provided to me this morning, SPLC 106.01, states that a person may not "encumber or obstruct" a public place by placing building materials or other substances there. I understand the City's responsibility to keep sidewalks and public rights-of-way safe and accessible. I have taken that responsibility seriously. I removed plants that were encroaching on the sidewalk and trimmed growth along the fence line that could interfere with pedestrian passage.

If safety and obstruction are the concern, I would also respectfully ask the City to consider the actual conditions of the boulevard. The most significant trip hazard in front of my property is not the landscaping materials I have intentionally placed there. The sidewalk installed by the City has sunk and warped, creating an approximately four-inch ledge. A 74-year-old neighbor has actually tripped over this ledge and fallen. I would appreciate the City's attention to that very real safety concern as well.

I fully understand that the City has ordinances that residents are expected to follow, and I am not asking for special treatment or to be exempt from those requirements. I am asking for reasonable consideration of the circumstances and for the City to recognize the difference between an unsafe, neglected property and a property that is actively being improved.

Good landscaping takes time. In my case, creating the yard I envision involves removing invasive species, improving the soil, establishing more beneficial plantings, and doing the work gradually as time, money, weather, air quality, and other conditions allow. I am trying to beautify my property and create a space that is beneficial to pollinators and the broader community. That process will not happen overnight.

I am concerned that a disproportionate amount of City staff time and resources is being spent responding to one neighbor's complaint about a property that is clearly being actively maintained and improved. It is frustrating to feel that my efforts are being treated as evidence of neglect simply because my landscaping does not look like a conventional turf-grass lawn or because one neighbor may not appreciate the way I have chosen to landscape my property.

I respectfully ask the City Council to consider the work I have already completed, the photographs documenting the current condition of the property, the ongoing nature of the landscaping project, and the distinction between intentional landscaping and actual obstruction or neglect. I also ask that the Council consider whether continued nuisance-abatement action is an appropriate use of City resources under these circumstances.

I am committed to maintaining a safe and accessible boulevard and continuing to improve my property. I simply ask for the opportunity to do that work thoughtfully and over time.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my statement and the attached photographs.

Sincerely,

Anna Fraser