

Response to Public Comments – Rezoning Application A-6-25-Z (99 Melville Road)

To: City of Sault Ste. Marie Council and Planning Department

Date: July 11, 2025

Dear Council Members and Planning Staff

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the public comments received regarding the rezoning application for 99 Melville Road (Application A-6-25-Z). I appreciate the time that members of the community have taken to voice their concerns, and I want to acknowledge and address those concerns with openness and accountability.

1. Background and Acknowledgment

I moved to Sault Ste. Marie in 2020 with nothing but \$10,000 in debt and a strong desire to build a future. Since then, I have worked extremely hard through the pandemic, economic uncertainty, and personal risk to build a stable life in this community. I owe a great deal to the people of this town, the City's staff and officials, and those who have helped me along the way.

I am not a developer. I am simply someone trying to build a future for myself and my family. I saw an opportunity to restore a long-vacant property into safe, affordable housing. I understand now that I made mistakes early on, partly out of inexperience and lack of awareness of municipal procedures, but also very honestly out of desperation not to lose everything I had worked for.

I take full responsibility for those missteps and have taken every step since to comply with the City's requirements.

2. Building Standards and Inspections

The building was constructed specifically to meet the standards required for a rooming house. I personally completed the electrical work in accordance with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code and had everything inspected by ESA inspectors, City building inspectors, and external consultants. The work was conducted with attention to safety, durability, and code compliance, and I continue to take pride in the quality of what has been built.

The building has passed all required inspections and has been used in accordance with the applicable zoning as an owner-occupied dwelling with up to three tenants since February 2025.

3. Community Engagement

An initial information session was held on April 23, 2025, at the property. Some of the letters were unfortunately delivered later than intended due to my own oversight. This was not intentional and had a negative impact on both the outreach and my efforts to be transparent with the community. I regret the error and take full responsibility.

In addition, I have personally reached out to the neighbors who submitted formal complaints, both directly and through mutual contacts, to offer a private meeting or tour of the property should they wish to discuss their concerns further.

A second meeting was hosted by the City of Sault Ste. Marie to allow the public to speak directly with planning staff. Only one resident attended and stated they were there mainly out of curiosity.

4. Use and Operations

The proposal is to allow for a small-scale rooming house with responsible oversight. The property is not a short-term rental or large boarding facility. The interior includes fire separations, code-compliant exits, and shared amenities designed to support longer-term tenants in need of affordable housing.

Once the rezoning is approved, I have confirmed arrangements for the following:

- Scheduled garbage removal through GFL Environmental
- Grass cutting and Snow removal contracted out to a local company.
- Routine pest and rodent control through Amato Pest Control

An on-site manager will continue to oversee the property. Regarding claims about KC Security, the individual seen at the property was a friend who happens to work there. There is no security contract in place, and I have a signed letter from KC Security confirming this.

5. Neighborhood Compatibility

I understand the desire to preserve the neighborhood's single-family character. However, the proposed R3 zoning still reflects low-density residential use and is consistent with other areas of the city. Rooming houses are part of the affordable housing solution and can exist compatibly in a residential setting when properly managed.

This project is not speculative development. It is a personal effort by a local resident to contribute meaningfully to the community and recover from early mistakes.

6. Site Planning and Policy

The property is not currently subject to Site Plan Control under existing regulations. However, I am open to entering into a voluntary site management agreement if Council deems it appropriate. This could address matters such as parking, snow removal, and waste storage.

7. Moving Forward

This experience has taught me a great deal. I have done my best to fix the mistakes made at the start and bring the property into full compliance. My goal is not to change the character of the neighborhood but to offer well-managed, affordable housing that helps meet local needs.

I respectfully ask Council to consider the context and intent of this application. I welcome any further discussions and remain committed to being a good neighbor and a responsible housing provider.

Sincerely,
Mangesh Shende