

### **GEORGE MUNICIPALITY:**

## **STUDENT ACCOMMODATION POLICY, 2023**

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#### 1. INTERPRETATION AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

Council adopted the amended Zoning Scheme Bylaw in September 2023, which introduces a new land use description for student accommodation. In the original Zoning Scheme Bylaw of 2017, accommodation for students were treated under the normal requirements for a household or as a boarding hostel / house on properties with the appropriate rights.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to regulate and manage student accommodation in George Municipality. Student accommodation is defined in the Zoning Scheme Bylaw, 2023 as 'a building designed as a dwelling house which is used primarily by students for residential purposes and who may share communal facilities such as a kitchen, lounge, and bathroom'.

Frequent occurrences of student accommodation in low density residential areas places a burden on the local roads networks and landlords often do not take into consideration whether the premises is conveniently located in relation to amenities and public transport. If poorly managed, such a site can result in deterioration of the neighbourhood and a breakdown of the sense of place where other residents live on a permanent basis.

#### The policy aims:

- i. To ensure that all students have access to appropriate and affordable accommodation options.
- ii. To stablish standards for student accommodation facilities to ensure safety, health, and well-being.
- iii. To encourage collaboration between educational institutions, accommodation providers, and relevant stakeholders.
- iv. To manage the impact of student accommodation on the surrounding area.
- v. To provide suitable locations for student accommodation.

# Development parameters for student accommodation are described in the Zoning Scheme By-Law, 2023, and include the following:

#### a) Height

- i. The height of a dwelling house may not exceed 6.5 metres to the wall plate in all cases, and 8.5 metres to the ridge of the roof in the case of a pitched roof, provided that if the intention is to utilise any area above the roof for recreational or entertainment purposes, the height may not exceed 6.5 metres.
- ii. The general provisions regarding earth banks and retaining structures in this by-law apply.

#### b) Coverage and building lines

i. Building lines are specified in the Zoning Scheme By-Law, 2023 in the table entitled "Coverage and Building lines" from the relevant erf boundary which is depicted in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Coverage and building lines for a dwelling house.

Erf Size	Coverage	Building Lines			
EII Size		Street	Side	Rear	
Less than or equal to 250m <sup>2</sup>	80%	1 meter	0 metre on one side 1 metre on all other sides	1.5 meters	
Greater than 250m² but not exceeding 500m²	200m <sup>2</sup> or 65% whichever is greater	3 meters	0 metre on one side 1.5 metres on all other sides	1.5 meters	
Greater than 500m² but not exceeding 1 000m²	325m <sup>2</sup> or 50% whichever is greater	4 meters	2 meters	2 meters	
Greater than 1 000m²	500m <sup>2</sup> or 40% whichever is greater	5 meters	3 meters	3 meters	

#### c) Window and door placement

Any portion of a building which contains an external window or door facing onto a common boundary must—

- i. be set back at least 1,5 metres from such boundary; and
- ii. the portion of building to be set back from the boundary must include the door or window, together with the additional length of wall that is required to make up a total minimum length of 3 metres.
- d) Garages, carports, and outbuildings
  - i. A garage, carport and outbuildings are permitted within the common boundary building line:
  - ii. provided that the garage carport, and outbuilding—
    - (aa) do not exceed a height of 4 metres;
    - (bb) does not contain more than a double garage façade facing a public street;
    - (cc) when combined, does not exceed a total length of 12 metres a long a common boundary building line;
    - (dd) does not include a braai room or entertainment area.
  - iii. For land units of 650 m<sup>2</sup> and less, -
    - (aa) a garage or carport erected parallel to the street boundary is permitted up to 1,5 metres from the street boundary;
    - (bb) a garage or carport erected perpendicular to the street boundary is permitted up to 5,5 metres from the street kerb;
  - iv. provided the garage, carport, or outbuilding—
    - (aa) does not exceed a height of 4 metres;
    - (bb) does not contain more than a double garage façade facing a public street; and
    - (cc) does not exceed a length of 6.5 metres along a common boundary building line.
  - v. For land units exceeding 650 m², a garage or carport that is accessed perpendicular to the street boundary may not be closer than 5 metres from that street boundary, notwithstanding the street building line. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (ii) and (iii), a garage or carport may be erected within the street boundary building line if, in the opinion of the Municipality, compliance with the street boundary building line is not practical due

to steep slopes of the ground between the road and the property concerned. The Municipality must determine the street boundary building line in such a case.

#### e) Parking and access

i. Parking and access must be provided on the land unit in accordance with the Zoning Scheme and is outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Parking requirements

Land Use	Normal Area	PT1 Areas	PT2 Areas
	1 bay per bedroom	0.75 bay per bedroom	0.5 bay per bedroom
Student	2 bays per	2 bays per	1 bay per
Accommodation	owner's/manager's unit	owner's/manager's	owner's/manager's
	1 bay for visitors	unit	unit

#### f) Garaging

- i. Garaging for up to four vehicles is permitted on properties up to 1000m<sup>2</sup>.
- ii. For properties larger than 1000m<sup>2</sup> garaging of up to 6 vehicles are permitted.

#### 2. GUIDELINES

- a) The following criteria should be contemplated by the Municipality in the consideration of applications:
  - i. Is the property adjacent to another erf with similar or higher rights or situated in a business node?
  - ii. Will the character of the area and property be negatively affected?
  - iii. Are there any objections against the application?
  - iv. Is the erf in an area suitable for the level of increasing density proposed in the application? (Consider locality in respect of i.e., busy road)
  - v. Is the capacity of engineering services sufficient to accommodate the development?
  - vi. Is there adequate space available on the erf for parking? (1 bay per bedroom; 2 per manager's flat; 1 for visitors)
  - vii. Is the desirability of the development proven?
  - viii. Does the location and design adhere to the guidelines outlined in this policy?
  - ix. Will any services be negatively affected?
  - x. Will there be a negative impact on traffic movement?

The following guidelines must be followed to ensure that student accommodation is inclusive and safe:

#### 2.1. LOCATION

- a) The following principles should be applied:
  - i. Accessibility of the property.
  - ii. Locality in respect of a higher order road.
  - iii. Locality in respect of public transport facilities.
  - iv. Locality in respect of main development corridors in the area.
  - v. Locality and distance from existing nodes and facilities.
  - vi. Locality in respect of higher density developments.

- b) Private student accommodation should ideally be located close to universities, colleges, and other educational institutions. This proximity reduces commuting time and makes it easier for students to attend classes, access libraries, and participate in campus activities.
- c) Accommodation should be easily accessible through public transportation networks, including buses, trains, and even within walking distance of the educational institution. This accessibility ensures that students can travel conveniently between their accommodation and campus.
- d) Safety is paramount. The chosen area should have a reputation for low crime rates and be well-lit and well-patrolled. Consider neighbourhoods that have a strong community watch presence or are known for their safety measures.
- Look for areas with essential amenities nearby, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, medical facilities, and recreational spaces. Access to these services makes daily living more convenient for students.
- f) Ensure that the area has reliable infrastructure, including well-maintained roads, electricity, water supply, and internet connectivity. These factors contribute to the comfort and well-being of students.
- g) Areas with cultural attractions, restaurants, cafes, and recreational facilities can enhance students' overall experience and quality of life.
- h) Consider areas where the cost of living is reasonable and aligns with students' budgets. Accommodation costs should not be excessive, ensuring that students from various economic backgrounds can afford to live in the area.
- i) Look for neighbourhoods that have a positive community atmosphere. This can contribute to a supportive living environment, especially for students who are away from home.
- j) Choose areas that are known for their diversity and inclusivity. This can help create a welcoming environment for students from various cultural and social backgrounds.
- k) Consider the environmental impact of the location, including factors like air quality, noise levels, and proximity to green spaces. A healthy environment contributes to students' well-being.
- Areas with services tailored to students, such as study spaces, tutoring centres, and student-friendly businesses, can enhance the overall experience.
- m) Research any upcoming developments or infrastructure projects in the area. These could affect the value of the property and the overall living conditions for students.

#### 2.2. DESIGN

- Residence designs must accommodate a maximum of two students per room and a maximum of 10 students per residence.
- b) A minimum area of 8m² must be provided for a bedroom occupied by one student and a minimum area of 14m² must be provided for a bedroom occupied by two students, which area includes only sleeping and study quarters and shall not include other communal living quarters, ablution areas, food preparation areas, dining areas or outdoor living areas.

- c) One toilet should be provided for every five students, and one shower should be provided for every seven students.
- d) Shower and ablution facilities must be designed in such a way that individual privacy is provided, and sanitary bins should be provided in every bathroom.
- e) The following minimum food preparation standards must be provided:
  - i. suitable food storage, preparation and kitchen space shall be provided.
  - ii. at least a four-plate stove (with oven) per 8 students.
  - iii. cold storage a minimum of a 320-litre capacity fridge / freezer combination is the minimum requirement per 8 students.
  - iv. lockable cupboards 1 per student.
  - v. countertop space must be sufficient for 25% of the capacity of the student residents for simultaneous usage.
- f) It is preferable that all student rooms have access to the internet for study purposes. All communal spaces designed for study purposes in residences must have internet access.
- g) The municipal guidelines pertaining to high density development in the MSDF and applicable LSDF must be adhered to.
- h) The design of the establishment may be subjected to scrutiny by the Aesthetic and Heritage Committee.
- i) In addition to the above all building designs must comply with SANS 10400.
- j) A dedicated refuse area should be provided and indicated on the SDP.
- Adequate indoor and/or outdoor recreational space should be provided on the property and indicated on the SDP.

#### 2.3. RULES & REGULATIONS FOR OWNERS AND TENANTS

Due to potential problems relating to the behaviour of occupants, noise, parking problems and other general problems anticipated, landlords must ensure that Bylaws regulating Public Safety and Public Nuisance are adhered to and in addition, lay down rules for occupants, which must be applied to ensure proper and acceptable conduct.

These rules apply to developments for student accommodation, boarding house, hostels and communes and will be included as conditions of approval for these types of developments:

- a) Appointment of a responsible person
  - i. The responsible person can be the owner of the property, or a person appointed by the owner.
  - ii. A landlord must either live on the property or appoint a manager who must live on the property to supervise the student. Alternatively, with permission from the Municipality, the responsible person should live within 500m from the property in the same street and must be able to supervise the property and the students living on the property.

- iii. If the responsible person does not reside on the property, CCTV equipment must be installed on the property in common areas to ensure their safety and enable the manager to conduct remote surveillance.
- iv. The telephone number, an alternative number and email address, at which the responsible person can be contacted, 24 hours a day, must always be openly displayed on the street boundary of the erf and in the office or reception area of the premises.
- v. The responsible person shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that occupants abide by the house rules.
- b) Duties of the responsible person and owner of the property:
  - i. ensure that in the interest of public health and safety, and to prevent the creation of nuisances all buildings on the premises are maintained in a clean, hygienic, safe and sound condition and comply with all applicable by-laws and other legislation;
  - ii. implement safety measures such as smoke detectors, burglar bars, alarm systems, security gates, and CCTV surveillance;
  - iii. ensure that the exterior and outdoor spaces of the property are well maintained;
  - iv. make adequate provision for cooking and food preparation facilities to the satisfaction of the Chief Health Inspector of the district authority for the persons accommodated on the premises;
  - v. not cause, allow, or permit cooking or preparation of food to take place in any bedroom or elsewhere than in the part of the kitchen as indicated on the site development and building plans, by means of a naked flame or cause or allow or permit any fire to be lit on the premises except in a stove or in any other device or installation designed for the purpose;
  - vi. provide and maintain in good order ablution and toilet facilities which includes sanitary bins;
  - vii. ensure a supply of water at all times, which facilities and supply are adequate in relation to the services available in the area;
  - viii. ensure that adequate provision is made for an environment where students can study in tranquillity;
  - ix. ensure that students have uninterrupted access to lighting to enable them to study when needed;
  - x. equip each bedroom with adequate furniture and fittings, including sufficient bed and mattresses for the number of persons permitted to occupy such bedroom, as well as curtains or screens for each window which are of a width and density adequate to screen such window;
  - xi. ensure that no person sleeps in any part of the premises other than a bedroom or occupies or uses any part of the premises for a purpose for which it was not designated;
  - xii. not allow more people to occupy the premises as permitted by the George Zoning Scheme;
  - xiii. ensure that students do not smoke in their rooms by providing a designated indoor/outdoor smoking area;
  - xiv. apply no tolerance for the use of drugs and the irresponsible use of alcohol on the property;

- xv. keep all sanitary fittings, boilers, lighting and all other equipment and installations on the premises at all times in proper working order and ensure that they are functioning efficiently and so not give rise to a nuisance;
- xvi. not allow the accumulation of refuse, rubble, and litter on the premises in a manner or to an extent which could create a nuisance or a public health or safety hazard;
- xvii. make adequate provision in compliance with the by-laws applicable thereto for the collection and temporary storage of refuse generated on the premises and take steps to ensure that refuse is not discarded or dumped elsewhere than in the refuse storage bins placed within the boundaries of the premises;
- xviii. take adequate measures to prevent the breeding or harbouring of rodents, flies, vermin, or mosquito's;
- xix. not cause, allow, or permit any person indecently to expose himself from anywhere on the premises;
- xx. ensure that noise levels, music and swearing are controlled and not disturb the privacy or well-being of any of the adjacent properties;
- xxi. all parking must take place within the boundaries of the property and no noise from motor vehicles may disturb neighbours after hours;
- xxii. the general amenity of the neighbourhood may not be injured, or any nuisance caused as a result of any activity on the property;
- xxiii. ensure that while the premises are occupied the electricity and water supply and sewage disposal and plumbing installations and all equipment pertaining thereto are in good working order at all times;
- xxiv. ensure general good conduct of students to avoid littering, loitering, disrespect, and public nuisance.
- c) Ensure that no person occupies such premises unless
  - i. each room has a functioning lighting system;
  - ii. every emergency route, passageway, entrance, stairway and lift have adequate lighting and is unobstructed;
  - iii. provide and maintain in good order fire-fighting equipment in accordance with the requirements of the National Building Regulations and ensure that nothing is done to render any emergency route referred to in section 3(a)(b)(vi) inadequate or less effective;
  - iv. ensure that the evacuation plans and emergency instructions and numbers are visibly displayed around the premises;
  - v. ensure that waste and storm water drains and gullies are kept clear and unblocked at all times.

#### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL

# 3.1. GENERAL CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENT

In addition to the requirements of the applicable Zoning Scheme, the following policy parameters shall apply to any property used for student accommodation, provided that where an application for rezoning or consent use is evaluated for establishment of larger accommodation facilities, these conditions must be imposed and applied during the approval of the application:

- a) A site development plan shall be submitted to the local authority for approval and shall be approved prior to the consideration of building plans.
- b) Access to and egress from the property shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Municipality.
- c) Parking for students, visitors and other occupants must be provided within the boundaries of the property to the satisfaction of the Municipality in the ratio of 1 parking bay per bedroom; 2 bays per owner's home/cottage; 1 parking bay for visitors.
- d) No parking shall be permitted in the road.
- e) Site access shall conform to the Zoning Scheme By-law.
- f) The property and buildings shall be maintained to the satisfaction of the local authority.
- g) The intensity of music or any other sound generated on the property shall be of such a nature that the music/sound shall not be audible outside the boundaries of the property; provided further that such music/sound shall not exceed 7 decibels above the ordinary residential noise level as defined in clause 1 of Government notice R2544 of 1990-11-02.
- h) A screen wall of at least 1,8m shall be erected by the owner of the student accommodation establishment between the concerned property and adjacent residential properties to the satisfaction of the local authority.
- i) A clear visible and readable notice board with a maximum size of 650mm x 450mm or 1.5m<sup>2</sup> must be affixed at the entrance of the property, indicating the name and twenty-four-hour contact number of the owner/agent for purposes of the submission of any complaints in the event of any adverse noise, disturbance or unbecoming behaviour.
- j) The facade and general structure of existing buildings in existing residential neighbourhoods shall conform with the general character of the immediate area within which it is located.
- k) A copy of the house rules must be submitted with the site development plan and may be amended by the Municipality if deemed necessary, the house rules must be provided to each resident and a copy must be displayed in the reception area of the residence.
- I) A copy of the house rules should be available for inspection on the property at all times and must be enforced by the owner of the property.
- m) Engineering services development charges will be levied in terms of the policy of the local authority, as determined by Council.
- n) Building plan to be submitted in terms of section 4 of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act, 103 of 1977, for the development.

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- o) Building plans to comply with SANS 10400, and any other applicable legislation.
- p) No construction or alteration may be commenced with until such time as a building plan has been approved.
- q) The property may only be used for the intended purpose once a Certificate of Occupation has been issued.