

Connected Communities response: Sarah Rich (Rose Hill Avenue)

Description

ATTN: Melissa Autry, Clerk of Council

RE: Response in Opposition to Cincinnati's Proposed "Connected Communities" Zoning Amendments

To Members of Cincinnati City Council and Mayor;

I am writing to express my extreme concern for and opposition to the proposed and overreaching "Connected Communities" zoning amendments for the North Avondale Rose Hill Neighborhood.

As a longtime resident of North Avondale, I am writing to ask each of you to vote against the ordinance. The sweeping zoning changes will negatively affect North Avondale as well as other neighborhoods.

North Avondale is packed with unique architecture that could not be duplicated today – both large homes and small homes.

This historically significant neighborhood with homes of all sizes is the primary reason why North Avondale is so special and diverse. Additionally, it is not uncommon for historically significant North Avondale housing to sell in excess of one million dollars, driving significant tax revenue for the city (especially as taxes have tripled this year).

Placing 4 story rectangular-block buildings next to these historic homes throughout the neighborhood completely destroys the special nature of the community and saddles the residents, such as my family, with the cost of accommodation of this growth through our lost property values. Neighborhoods along these randomly chosen "transit corridors" (really, no other road going through Mt Lookout or Hyde Park gets significant traffic?) are being unfairly targeted and the result is that the city will be sued by the many homeowners whose home values suddenly plummet.

Why I Oppose the Current Plan:

1. An accelerated decision, with a sham of a public engagement process happening way too late in the process. The proposed ordinance was already drafted and sent to the Mayor on April, 17, 2023. In addition, the original plan was written by the Urban Land Institute on June 22, 2021 and therefore, our comments and participation cannot be meaningful.
2. The City has a terrible history with out-of-town property owners and investors. These zoning changes will only exacerbate this issue and increase the potential for out-of-town investors to divide single family homes for investment opportunity.
3. The proposed change in zoning. Specifically, the elimination of zoning for single-family homes, and the relaxed height restrictions and setbacks.

4. Reduction/Elimination in parking requirements without an adequate public transit system.
5. The proposal lacks safeguarding of the neighborhood's character which will result in what NANA has been working against for years: utter destruction of the unique, historic charm of our community.
6. Potential impact on the environment, greenspace, police, fire, sewer, storm water and water mains have not been considered in the plan.
7. The plan does not consider community-driven development for North Avondale's historic, architectural and cultural preservation.

Additionally, I believe the following points need to be addressed prior to any council vote on Connected Communities.

1. **Unintended Consequences** – A more recent Urban Land Institute study found that less restrictive zoning regulations increased housing supply, but not for renters and low income peoples. Also, detrimental increases in housing density led to less affordability and increased incidents of crime. Though I agree that increased investment in subsidy programs and affordable housing development is necessary, these zoning changes will only exacerbate the problem by further concentrating poverty and promoting higher cost rentals/ increased homeownership costs in the Connected Communities areas by driving out the affordable housing opportunities.
2. **Fairness** – Existing homeowners have purchased and invested in their homes under the current zoning regulations. Arbitrarily changing these zoning regulations after the fact to allow multi-family housing in historically single-family neighborhoods will decrease their property values and neighborhood dynamics that led them to live in a particular neighborhood. This will also open up the city to multiple lawsuits for unfairly targeting certain neighborhoods and ruining home values.
3. **Unequally targeted** – Why are only residents of North Avondale, Paddock Hills, Northside, etc. being asked to sacrifice their neighborhood character in search of affordable housing? All of these neighborhoods already have plenty of affordable housing. Why are neighborhoods like Hyde Park, Mt Lookout or Oakley **not** being asked to sacrifice their neighborhood character under Connected Communities?
4. **Government Official Personal Financial Gain** – City Council and the mayor need to disclose properties purchased within a ½ mile of these corridors so that citizens can feel confident personal financial gain is not at the heart of these changes.
5. **Legality** – I question how Connected Communities is legal. If you have an extreme housing shortage in the ENTIRE City, then change zoning in ALL of the City. How you can selectively destroy certain neighborhoods, diminish property values and concentrate poverty all based on bus routes?

North Avondale stands as an economically, ethnically and socially diverse neighborhood that needs to be protected from a plan that does not consider these values. I hope that the city will respect the overwhelming concerns of the residents of North Avondale and not move forward until our concerns are addressed.

Sarah Rich, Rose Hill Avenue

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Author

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