

Connected Communities response: Troy Robinson (Red Bud Avenue)

Description

Dear Mayor Pureval and Council Members,

As a resident of North Avondale and a current NANA (North Avondale Neighborhood Association) board member, I am strongly against the City's proposed Connected Communities ordinance and 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.

Why I Oppose the Current Plan:

1. The proposed ordinance was drafted and sent to the Mayor on April 17, 2023. In addition, the plan was originally written by the Urban Land Institute on June 22, 2021, therefore, neighborhood engagement and feedback has been considerably undermined.
2. The 4/24/2023 Urban Land Institute study found that less restrictive zoning regulations increased housing supply, but not for renters and low-income people. Also, detrimental increases in housing density led to less affordability and increased incidents of crime.
3. 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. Unless zoning requires owner-occupancy for an extended period, this will occur (unlikely legal to do so).
4. The proposed change in zoning. Specifically, the elimination of zoning for single-family homes, and the relaxed height restrictions and setbacks.
5. Reduction/Elimination in parking requirements without a robust public transit system.
6. The proposal lacks safeguarding of the neighborhood's character which will result in what NANA has been working against for years...destruction of the unique, historic charm of our community.
7. Potential impact on the environment, greenspace, police, fire, sewer, storm water and water mains have not been considered in the plan.

What Else can be Done:

There must be better options when looking to increase housing stock. The following alternatives were previously sent to you from a North Avondale neighbor. I agree with his alternatives and provide them again for your consideration.

1. Enforcement – there are many blighted and neglected properties throughout Cincinnati. Enforcement of municipal housing and maintenance codes will either cause the owner to improve their properties or sell. This is not being done in a comprehensive manner due to building inspector staff

shortages/ funding. Also, mandatory annual housing code inspection of rental housing is needed. Increasing fines and consequences of non-compliance may be necessary.

2. Assessment/ Foreclosure – failure of a property owner to maintain their properties would be a “big-stick” in turning blighted properties into needed housing.

3. City/ Port/ 3CDC Purchase/ Stabilization/Resale – Foreclosure or purchase of abandoned lots or properties that fail enforcement actions and then offering them to new buyers with financing/ tax abatement/ and other incentives. I personally was involved in the very successful City led VBS (Vacant Building Stabilization) program. As one of the City’s Consulting Architects we stabilized over 30 buildings in OTR that were foreclosed on by the City or abandoned. Stabilization included: roofing, closing doors/ windows, and structural repairs to prevent further deterioration or collapse of the buildings. These stabilized buildings were eventually sold by 3CDC for \$1 to investors who promised to renovate/ occupy the buildings. The success you see in OTR is in great part due to this VBS program. Otherwise, the failure to stabilize these buildings would have led to their demolition and the loss of much of the OTR fabric. This approach can be implemented city-wide to great effect.

4. Variances – though I’m not a huge fan of zoning variances, there are times and places where it is needed. The current zoning code allows for some “flexibility” while engaging neighborhood stakeholders in an organized and transparent process. Why change something that has been largely successful in accommodating exceptions to current zoning?

5. Market Forces – A better solution is to keep the historically zoned single-family neighborhoods intact and let the market determine the best location and type of affordable housing as permitted by current zoning. This allows stabilized communities and active neighborhood involvement (ex. NANA and others) to serve as an anchor for peripheral growth of multi-family housing. “Multi-family rentals everywhere” is the antithesis of good urban planning. Uniform housing types, in defined neighborhoods, is the goal of many successful urban plans and zoning ordinances – i.e. utopian planned communities.

I urge the City of Cincinnati to leave the zoning as-is. Instead of legislating destructive change; enforce current codes/ regulations and find financial resources and incentives to motivate the free market to determine the best location and type of affordable housing within the constraints of the current zoning code.

Kind Regards,

Troy Robinson

Red Bud Avenue

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Author

northavondale