

ADU zoning change

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To:Public Testimony <PublicTestimony@newhavenct.gov>

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To The Legislation Committee:

I am writing in opposition to the ADU zoning change. Most importantly, I am against allowing ADUs to be built on non-owner occupied property.

I have been a resident of New Haven since 2007, and a homeowner in the Beaver Hills neighborhood since 2012. When I bought my home over a decade ago, my short block consisted solely of owner-occupied homes. Since 20020, three houses have gone on the market; all three have been purchased by large mega landlords, LLCs run by Mandy and Ocean Management. As you're aware, these landlords have an outstanding number of cases before LCI, and several tenant unions have formed in response to their poor management. Indeed, these mega land lords have been poor neighbors here in Beaver Hills. Unlicensed work is an ongoing issue. It is up to the residents to police these landlords, as the city fails to enforce ordinances. Houses that used to be affordable for first time homebuyers are now being rented at exorbitant cost. These homes are not maintained well, and there are ongoing issues with pests and blight.

The zoning change, as proposed by the Elicker administration, does nothing to protect neighborhoods like Beaver Hills. The neighborhood's large lots and single family homes near a university make it very attractive for mega landlords. And with the proposed zoning changes, many of the single family homes they have already bought can be converted into multi-unit properties. This will increase the interest that investor landlords have in purchasing property here, which will further increase housing prices, making this neighborhood even more unaffordable. Home buyers cannot compete in this market, and this zoning change will slam the door to home ownership completely. This is concerning in a city with an already-low home ownership rate.

It is also very concerning that the city is considering this without having a comprehensive policy on AirBnB, whose domination of housing markets have exacerbated the affordable housing crises in many cities.

ADUs are expensive and come with a lot of red tape, and only large landlords will be able to take advantage of this proposal. If the city is serious about ADUs, then financial incentives for smaller mom-and-pop landlords might be necessary. I would support including very small mom-and-pop landlords who live on-site or an adjacent property. But the proposal, as written, is a gift to unscrupulous investor mega landlords with troubling histories of safety issues, property neglect, unaffordable rents, and anti-tenant behavior.

I also disagree with the proposal to do away with lot size requirements, particularly if it is coupled with the change in owner-occupancy rule. I think investor landlords will push the limits of the ordinance in order to get as much money out of their investment as possible. They will not care about their neighbor's quality of life nor property value. The density of Beaver Hills will increase greatly, which changes the character of this historic neighborhood. My concern about new structures is that they will not be built to fit in with the existing houses, most of which are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Again, this is based on my experience dealing with mega landlords here, who have not maintained the historic nature of their investment properties. I think more nuanced, less extreme changes could be implemented successfully in these areas, particularly if the owner-occupancy rule is maintained.

I do support the current ADU ordinance, and I believe ADUs, if properly managed, can be an important part of a comprehensive housing affordability plan. I understand that it hasn't been an effective policy, and changes are necessary. But this proposal does not just loosen the ADU process. It gives mega landlords incentive to further destabilize neighborhoods like Beaver Hills.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jessica Nelson
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