

NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER:

LEFTIST SOCIAL ENGINEERS SEEK TO ELIMINATE SINGLE FAMILY ZONING.

BACKGROUND. Leftist social engineers are waging another war against middle income and higher income citizens in the U.S. and Nebraska, but most taxpayers have not noticed. The Left is both envious of middle and upper income groups and relishes the opportunity to offer the poor and minorities additional welfare benefits. Not content with demanding free food and free health care for the underprivileged, socialists now want to guarantee those who they champion with additional taxpayer-funded housing, free rent, and free utilities. The socialists disguise this largesse as a plea for “affordable housing.” Some on the Left make the case that the only way to increase housing supply at the necessary pace is through strict mandates that require cities to build a specific number of cheap housing units in established neighborhoods and impose heavy financial penalties on developers who refuse to comply. It is coming to your neighborhood soon, so beware.

CROWD HOUSING. Single-family zoning is a regulation that makes it illegal to build anything other than an individual, detached home on a parcel of land, excluding dwellings like townhouses, apartments, and duplexes that can house multiple tenants. Developers build these areas in response to high demand among citizens, who want to reside in safe, comfortable neighborhoods. In single family neighborhoods, we often see tool sheds, dog houses, tree houses, and doll houses in back yards, convenient places to store garden equipment and snow blowers, fun places for our children and pets to play. Now, the Left wants to upend single family zoning by allowing a minimum of 1 accessory dwelling unit on a single-family lot. Such unit attached to the main house or detached. No additional parking requirements. Restrictive homeowner association covenants repealed. No public hearing required. These units could serve as long-term or short-term rentals. Such rezoning would bring strangers into your neighborhood, accessible to your children playing outside. Adjacent property values would plummet. More noise with which to contend. **LB 1166**, sponsored by State Sen. John Lowe, would force every NE municipality to allow these mortal wounds to single-family neighborhoods. His bill would allow municipalities to adopt regulations *even more permissive* than provisions of his bill. No impact statement needed. Shotgun houses, small, narrow dwellings, will mushroom.

ZONING LAWS ERASED. The social engineering crowd mocks single-family residents as ones who want substantial privilege and selfishly seek to preserve such privilege. The Biden Regime is awarding grants and tax credits to cities that alter their zoning laws in order to provide more equitable access to taxpayer-subsidized housing. A family might love their home with a white picket fence and a big backyard for a barbeque pit or swings, but Biden believes that multifamily zoning will combat climate change, racial injustice, and lack of cheap housing. Pres. Trump wrote a Wall Street Journal editorial in which he lambasted Democrat efforts to abolish single-family zoning. “America’s suburbs are a shining example of the American Dream, where people can live in their own homes, in safe, pleasant neighborhoods,” he wrote,



“The left wants to take that American Dream away from you.” He repeatedly warned while he was in office that Democrats would destroy the suburbs with low-income housing that would bring crime and reduce home values. Most municipal governments have refused to eliminate zoning restrictions because of taxpayer and legitimate developer opposition. Yet, greedy developers will take government cash to demolish houses and build a multiunit building next to your home. **LB 1166** would allow developers to build without neighborhood review or approval. Also note **LB 842**, sponsored by Sen. McKinney, to expand

eligibility for taxpayer-subsidized housing and limit the costs of monthly utility payments by renters, costs transferred to taxpayers. One big problem for a single-family neighborhood is that the change would deprive current residents of the opportunity to contest new development. Once an area rezoned for denser housing, developers could build anything that complies with the new zoning instead of having to seek a special exemption that gives existing residents an opportunity to challenge. Taking away that right amounts to citizen disenfranchisement. “Investors are buying homes and splitting a single-family home into four units,” says Kenny Stevens of the Kenny Stevens Team at Compass real estate brokerage, “they’re going to be trying to maximize income.” The scheme eliminates or reduces parking requirements for various housing types, allows accessory apartments built without a special permit or public hearing, and prohibits cities from enacting regulations that cap the number of multifamily housing units or require minimum square footage in a subdivision.

THE OBJECTIVES. The main objective is to obliterate one home per lot neighborhoods. Another source of opposition to single-family housing comes from density activists, who claim that living close together fosters greater community spirit and positive social results. Yet, surveys continue to find suburbanites more satisfied with their living conditions than those in the urban core or rural areas.¹ New laws passed in Oregon and New York legalize all kinds of housing banned for generations in single family areas, including duplexes, townhomes, and smaller apartment buildings. Denser housing supposedly can help limit the reliance on cars and long commutes that [exacerbate climate change](#). [Racial equity](#) is a goal.² Minneapolis voted to effectively eliminate single-family zoning citywide in 2019, allowing companies to build two- and three-unit apartment buildings on land previously zoned only for individual homes. This change to base zoning expanded the permitted variety of buildings and density of units. The city legalized accessory dwelling units in 2015, eliminated parking requirements near frequent transit service in 2015, and dropped parking requirements [citywide in 2021](#). Such action means requiring the wealthiest suburban communities and low-density neighborhoods within towns and cities to accommodate such construction.³ Note the accelerating exodus of homeowners from the Twin Cities.

THE CONSEQUENCES. Eliminating single-family zoning and allowing high density will cause increased crime, traffic congestion, strain on sewers and utilities, overcrowded schools, less greenery, decimated property values, and lower quality of life. Taxpayers would have to pay for additional infrastructure.⁴ Duplexes, 8-plexes, and apartment houses will proliferate on single-family lots in sedate neighborhoods. Abolishing single family zoning would, in most places where there is a high demand for housing, drive up housing prices as housing speculators compete to build more housing with their tax subsidies. A massive incentive for developers to buy homes, bulldoze them, and build multiple units, driving up further the price of land and existing units. Further, it would lead to the displacement of many tenants as landlords sell to developers for a handsome profit. One day you could wake up to the sound of bulldozers and jackhammers, as multiplexes spring up next door.⁵

THE REACTION. Across every demographic subgroup analyzed, respondents preferred single-family home developments by a wide margin.⁶ After backlash in Gainesville, Fla., city commissioners reversed their 2022 decision to end single-family zoning. This Florida city is the first in the country to rescind zoning changes. Many current homeowners fear added density will lead to outside crowds, parking nightmares, fewer trees, overtaxed municipal services, and more impervious surfaces that could cause flooding. They also worry it will change the character of their neighborhoods, and they prefer that apartment buildings stay in dense commercial corridors. Worries that such plan could further incentivize the tearing down of smaller, more affordable single-family homes replaced by multifamily units that would crowd neighborhoods.⁷ A new survey from Redfin revealed that homebuyers and sellers are almost twice as likely to oppose increased housing density in their neighborhood than to support it. The survey adds that African-American respondents under the age of 25 most likely to support policies that encourage dense housing. Of all who responded, 63% supported zoning policies that limit housing density, and 27% supported policies that allow such zoning.⁸



ALTERNATIVES. Encourage the construction of subsidized housing on land zoned for commercial, mixed-use, multi-family, or industrial uses. Offer financial incentives to builders to build low-cost enclaves, not pass coercive new laws, as the best way to spur development. Take advantage of federal urban homesteading laws and grants, whereby grantees can repair and renovate decrepit housing and eventually take ownership.

¹ Joel Kotkin & Wendell Cox, City Journal, [In Defense of Houses](#), July 16, 2019.

² Margaret Barthel, [The U.S. needs more affordable housing — where to put it is a bigger battle](#), Feb. 11, 2023.

³ Bloomberg. Yonah Freemark and Lydia Lo, [Effective Zoning Reform Isn't as Simple as It Seems](#), May 24, 2022.

⁴ Jeff Mapes, [Oregon Strikes Exclusive Single-Family Zoning, But Effects May Take Years](#), July 3, 2019.

⁵ Dan Cornford, Davisite, [Why eliminating single-family zoning is a terrible idea](#), June 19, 2021.

⁶ Jessica Trounstone, [You Won't be My Neighbor: Opposition to High Density Development](#), Dec. 6, 2021.

⁷ Ibid., Barthel.

⁸ [The Debate Over Single-Family Zoning](#), Aug. 2, 2019.



TAKE ACTION NOW. The density Bolsheviks are coming to town. Single-family homes are the backbone of American inspiration; single-family zoning we must protect by all means available. Pay attention to legislative hearings and city public hearings, if any, where you can testify or lobby via email or Snail Mail. Projects which require a public hearing are more likely to face rejection, and the first major lesson from Connecticut data is that public hearing requirements are an important target for neighborhood opposition, because they are far more widespread in constraining multifamily housing than most anticipated. Organize a strong showing in opposition to a proposal. Host neighborhood meetings to see how others in the area feel about the proposal. Assembling an organized vocal group in opposition can influence decision makers, who might have fears about the next election. All those opposing the zoning change should plan to speak out against it at all scheduled public hearings. In fact, to preserve your right to appeal, you will likely need to participate in a hearing. Neighborhood associations and homeowners have [published](#) editorials, approved resolutions, started petitions, waged comment wars on social media and online forums, and submitted public testimony and documentation raising alarm about how zoning abolition would destroy their neighborhoods.

Research, documentation, and analysis for this issue paper done by **Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom**. This material copyrighted by Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom, with express prior permission granted for its use by other groups in the *NE Conservative Coalition Network*. 2-24. C

Omaha Receives \$20 Million to Expand Affordable Housing

(November 2, 2023)

Omaha will expand the availability and accessibility of affordable housing with a \$20 million award from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Omaha is one of only four cities to receive federal funds under the Section 108 Loan Program.

“I want to congratulate Mayor Stothert for her leadership in affordable housing and championing innovative ideas to increase housing supply,” said HUD Regional Administrator Ulysses Clayborn. “We are in the middle of a housing crisis. We need more affordable housing, more workforce housing, market rate housing, mixed income housing. The award here today is an example of the type of collaboration it will take to address the crisis.”

The City applied for the Section 108 funds to supplement funds already allocated for affordable housing through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The City of Omaha received \$112 million in ARPA funds and committed \$20 million to affordable housing to be administered through a partnership with Front Porch. An additional \$20 million was matched by a philanthropic donation. The Section 108 loan brings the total to \$60 million.

“We have a strong foundation in place,” said Mayor Jean Stothert. “When we distributed federal pandemic aid, we made our largest investment in affordable housing. “Thank you to HUD for recognizing our commitment to affordable housing and another great opportunity for our city.”

The federal funds will be administered by a partner agency, and will be available as low-interest loans to non-profit and for-profit developers. Successful loan applicants can use the money to buy property or for pre-development work, such as infrastructure improvements, or to rehabilitate or build housing in neighborhoods primarily east of 42nd street in South and North Omaha. Applications are expected to be available in the first quarter of 2024.

The City has already awarded approximately \$12 million in low-interest development loans from the initial ARPA allocation to Front Porch. The projects are in various stages of development and represent about 500 housing units.

“Through this Section 108 award, Omaha will be able to provide an additional source of capital to developers to increase the supply of affordable housing. I cannot wait to see all the great things that will come from the award made here today.” said Clayborn.

