

Voices of West Urbana Petition Urbana City Council

The attached petition represents the views of more than two hundred residents in West Urbana. As a group, Voices of West Urbana developed and circulated this petition because of our concerns about pending revisions to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan particularly in the context of persistent efforts, most evident in PUD proposals, to encroach upon the character and integrity of the neighborhood. Additionally, we have been particularly troubled by the pattern of comments denigrating the neighborhood and our residents by sitting members of the Plan Commission that risk undermining the community's trust in the Comprehensive Plan process.

This neighborhood is not the only one in Urbana under threat, yet it is the only long-term neighborhood abutting the largest employer in the community; in 2007 it received an American Planning Association Award for "Great Places in America" -- the first year the APA issued these awards. We note that many other college towns are proactively seeking to preserve the viability of their walkable neighborhoods and we urge our Council to do the same.

We seek two immediate actions:

First, **we seek a commitment from Council to maintain the current R1-R3 zoning in West Urbana.** Our petition, and the comments appended by a range of signatories, demonstrate our collective support to preserve the character of our neighborhood. We ask you to heed this and bear this in mind going forward.

Second, we ask that the Council initiate immediate changes to the PUD process by developing and passing an ordinance that:

1. **Prevents circumvention of zoning** by prohibiting R1-R3 properties from being upzoned via a PUD.
2. **Creates a requirement that PUD applicants hold at least one meeting with the public** and demonstrate how they incorporated public feedback into their revised proposal.
3. **Requires that PUD scale and density be compatible with nearby existing structures.** This includes limiting parcel aggregation and the extension of building footprints across multiple parcels.

These changes will reinforce the intent of the current Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown to Campus plan, the requirements of the MOR district, and the Lincoln-Busey Corridor Design Guidelines, as well as build greater trust among West Urbana residents. Strengthened oversight of PUDs will reduce the recent friction between residents and the City that has resulted in repeated community organizing, including appeals and petitions to the City Council.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Voices of West Urbana,

C. K. Gunsalus and Erik Sacks
November 2, 2021