

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 12, 2019

Housing4All
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Stakeholders across the city and region are joining together to advocate for more housing options in the City of Bloomington.

Housing4All, a broad coalition of community groups, supports a path to increasing more diverse and sustainable housing in the City of Bloomington.

Advocates support allowing modest duplexes and triplexes (“plexes”) citywide in Bloomington’s Unified Development Code (UDO). This incremental change is one step in a long path to achieving better affordability, sustainability, and racial and economic inclusion in the City of Bloomington – the most expensive housing market in Indiana.

Housing4All includes residents from throughout the city, plus representatives from:

- Bloomington Housing Authority
- Bloomington Board of REALTORS
- Board of Trustees, Monroe County Community School Corporation
- College Democrats, Indiana University
- Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
- Loren Wood Builders
- South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities

According to Erin Predmore, CEO of the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce: “The shortage of workforce housing is a major concern for the local business community, making it difficult to recruit and retain jobs for a healthy economy.”

Predmore also noted that, “According to the recent Indiana Uplands Regional Housing Study, our community needs to add 5,123 units by 2030 to keep up with demand, or an average of 466 units per year. The need is clear. Our elected officials and policy makers need to lower barriers to development and use every possible tool to address this housing crisis.”

A wide swath of our community will benefit from smaller and more affordable housing options: service workers, IU support staff, young professionals, single parents, children, and seniors. A recent sample of occupants of existing plexes in Bloomington indicated that over 90 percent of current residents are over 25 years old.

Plexes are truly a historic urban form that once flourished in many of our oldest neighborhoods—before the current exclusionary zoning that now permits only the construction of detached single-family homes in much of the city. A local mural proclaims, “Bloomington: You Belong Here!” But our current zoning rules don’t yet live up to that aspiration. We need to lift that ban.

Without adequate tools to add to our housing needs, we are harming residents who can’t afford to live here, who aren’t fortunate enough to already own a home here, or who can’t afford the increasing rents. We are harming students who can’t afford to stay after graduation, and we are harming our workers and their employers. We are damaging the entire economic health of this region.

Additional Quotes from Advocates:

Amber Skoby, Executive Director of the Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA): “BHA stands for strengthening opportunity that begins but does not end with housing. The proposed UDO offers tools our community needs to build a variety of housing types including duplexes, triplexes and ADUs that promote inclusive communities welcoming to all income levels. Bloomington needs many solutions to help solve its housing challenges—BHA strongly supports re-allowing a healthy mix of homes of all shapes and sizes as a part of the affordability solution.”

Mary Jane Hall, Board President, Bloomington Board of REALTORS: “The Bloomington Board of Realtors believes that we need expanded housing options across our community. While this may only provide a small increase in our housing inventory, it could provide walkable opportunities to families who are currently shut out of the market. It is important that we work to meet our present housing needs without compromising the ability for future residents of Bloomington to meet their needs. This is a small, but important, first step.”

Sue Wanzer, Trustee, MCCSC School Board: “Allowing greater housing diversity in Bloomington is good for our schools. If more families of all backgrounds have a better shot at finding affordable homes to buy or rent, that will reduce the amount of racial and economic segregation currently present in our elementary schools. This won't happen overnight, but making it easier to add more homes throughout our community will make it easier for MCCSC to fulfill its educational mission.”

College Democrats at Indiana University: “We, as Democrats who value social and economic equity, must champion the UDO. Doing otherwise directly contradicts the values of our party. It's time for our all-Democratic City Council to be committed to upholding those values and taking necessary action to combat climate change; and that means voting for the adoption of the UDO.”

Loren Wood, Owner, Loren Wood Builders: "Bloomington should be working to increase density and re-legalize historic housing types throughout our city. I work with residents who are looking for housing to fit a wide variety of needs. Single family homes don't work for everyone, especially residents wanting to age in place. We have a housing crisis here that needs immediate attention. Increasing density and diversifying our housing options by allowing plexes and ADUs by-right would allow for incremental change, while preserving the character of our neighborhoods.”

Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director, Shalom Community Center: “Bloomington is a community of heart. But we have great challenges that don't match our values. We have the worst housing affordability in Indiana. And our housing and school systems are unintentionally deeply segregated by race and income. We need to change our policies so we can live into the values that make this city so special.”

Deborah Myerson, Executive Director, South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities: “Some have argued that single-family zoning in Bloomington wasn't intended to exclude people. But ‘intention’ doesn't matter when it is well-documented that single-family zoning leads to racial and economic exclusion. If we say we want to improve inclusion—but we continue supporting zoning that excludes people—we are actually undermining efforts to make Bloomington a more equitable, livable city.”

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