



March 22, 2021

Bloomington City Hall  
401 N. Morton St.  
Bloomington, IN 47404

To: Mayor John Hamilton  
Common Council: Matt Flaherty, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Dave Rollo, Kate Rosenbarger, Susan Sandberg, Sue Sgambelluri, Jim Sims, Ron Smith, Stephen Volan  
Plan Commission: Flavia Burrell, Beth Cate, Chris Cockerham, Israel Herrera, Jillian Kinzie, Neil Kopper, Susan Sandberg, Karin St. John, Brad Wisler

**RE: In Support of “Go Farther Together: Hit the Pause Button”**

The League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County supports the attached proposal called “Go Farther Together: Hit the Pause Button,” which represents a rational, citizen-based way to address consequential and contentious issues regarding housing in Bloomington. We strongly urge the City to consider pausing the current UDO revision process and adopt a time-limited approach along lines similar to what are laid out in this proposal—a process that is driven by comprehensive data and involves the perspectives of the range of stakeholders, and which can lead to a broad consensus about what is best for the future of Bloomington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann F. Birch". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ann F. Birch, President  
League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County  
[president@lww-bmc.org](mailto:president@lww-bmc.org)

**Go Farther Together: Hit the Pause Button**

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”—African Proverb

***Why We Should Hit the Pause Button***

In recent months, a complex upzoning proposal that would dramatically reshape our community has been pressed forward on an ambitious timeline during an especially difficult time to communicate. Coupled with the challenges related to COVID, social discord and a faltering economy, this process has left the community divided and may, if left uncorrected, lead to further unnecessary acrimony.

While the revised upzoning proposal of the amendments was a significant change, several concerns remain. We propose a time-limited pause on the most controversial aspects of the City’s UDO proposal—the plexes and mapping of the R4 zoning districts—in order to collect quality data, consider a variety of alternatives, and ensure meaningful community participation.

The purpose is not simply to delay a vote on the UDO amendments and map. Rather, we propose that the most controversial aspects of the City’s text and map amendments involving upzoning and plexes be tabled for a limited amount of time, and a process be set in motion to strive for community consensus on the most promising strategies through which Bloomington can address the critical questions of housing availability, inclusivity, affordability and sustainability.

***What Will Be Accomplished during the Pause?***

- Engage the Community More Fully in a Substantive, Time-Limited Process
  - Representatives of the Council, neighborhood associations, and Mayor’s office develop a strategy/timeline for data collection and active community involvement
  - That group will also define an ending date/criteria for completion of the pause
  - Conduct a survey similar to the Neighborhood Housing Survey (776 responses to date) to more fully assess community concerns
  - Ensure closer City/County collaboration to assess and meet housing needs
  - Consider zoom and in-person meetings (by fall, most should be fully vaccinated)
- Develop a Coherent Understanding of the Population Projections for Bloomington and Monroe County. Some data are already available, while other data will be available in 6-9 months
  - City and County Data
    - What are the City’s and County’s population forecasts? Do they align?
    - Do estimates of housing need include both City and County data?
  - State Data
    - Study of statewide housing needs: Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (Fall, 2021)
  - Federal Data
    - Incorporate US Census data: Available September, 2021

- Indiana University Data
  - IU's on-campus 2021-2022 enrollment (June, 2021)
  - Better understand IUB's projected enrollment cliff
  - Do the City's and IU's data align?
- Compare Bloomington to College Towns of Comparable Size
  - Directly engage comparable college towns, targeting Ann Arbor, West Lafayette, Iowa City, and possibly Ithaca, NY, and Athens, GA, on how they address:
    - Housing density
    - Upzoning
    - Issues of equity, inclusivity and affordability
    - Collaboration between city and county on issues of land use
- Develop a Consensus on Our Housing Goals and How Best to Achieve Them
  - Recognizing that one size does not fit all, move toward a more neighborhood-based approach to housing
  - Maintain the Comprehensive Plan's focus on the important role of all neighborhoods
  - Identify best new areas for both student and workforce housing
  - Explore form-based zoning as method for achieving neighborhood-specific design
  - Expand demand-side housing, such as subsidies and down-payment assistance
  - Ensure that infrastructure impact assessment will be conducted

### ***Conclusion***

The pause strategy is designed to include all parts of the community in a comprehensive approach, maximizing data-based decision making and meaningful public engagement, and honoring Bloomington's longstanding tradition of participatory democracy. All of us working in collaboration can best address the current housing issues and future pressing problems that Bloomington will continue to face.

This appeal was informed by Go Farther Together, a group of concerned citizens from neighborhoods across Bloomington who share a common commitment to find a pathway for the City administration and the community to work more closely in addressing the zoning and related changes now being advanced by the City. We believe that a time-limited pause will allow the City and other key stakeholders to better collect quality data, consider a variety of alternatives, and ensure meaningful community participation throughout the process, resulting in a more sustainable and widely embraced outcome.

For more information contact: Russ Skiba [rjskiba72@gmail.com](mailto:rjskiba72@gmail.com)

*Proposal included here with permission.*