

## **LC 9 Advocacy Project Write-Up**

Affordable housing stands as a cornerstone of public health, often recognized as a pivotal social determinant of health. Despite its rich cultural heritage and vibrant community life, many Cincinnati residents struggle with housing instability and affordability. This problem is not merely a matter of finding shelter but is intricately tied to broader social and health outcomes. Recognizing these challenges, the Cincinnati Department of City Planning & Engagement (DCPE) embarked on an ambitious initiative to address affordable housing needs through the Connected Communities project. This project entails a series of land use and zoning policy changes aimed at transforming Cincinnati into a more inclusive, accessible, and people-focused city. The goal is to enhance the city's housing landscape in a way that promotes diversity, health, and connectivity fostering a more equitable approach to land use.

In order to accomplish this goal, the policy aims to stabilize rental prices for residents. Key provisions also include relaxed parking and design requirements, increased zoning for row houses, and permission for home daycares in more districts. The policy is intended to benefit vulnerable populations, especially ethnic minorities and the elderly, but it may not fully address the needs of the extremely impoverished or those who are unhoused. Additionally, the policy lacks a clear way to measure success after its implementation. This means that it will be very difficult to discover limitations in the policy and make improvements in the future. It is important for policymakers to evaluate the success of the changes to make sure that the community's needs are met.

Throughout the development of this policy, community feedback was collected at multiple points via focus groups, surveys, and community engagement meetings. Although they received over 2000 responses, only 39% of those who provided input were members of the community that would be impacted by this policy change. Residents or renters who live in apartments, condo buildings, or small-scale mixed-use buildings are those who stand to be impacted most by this new policy. This group was very underrepresented in those surveyed, with a deficit of 8% compared to the 2020 census. Comparatively, those who reside in a single-family home made up 61% of all survey respondents, being overrepresented by 25% according to the 2020 census. This uneven distribution of survey respondents suggests that the policy may not have adequately taken into account the voices of those who stand to be impacted the most by its implementation.

As demonstrated above, there is still a significant amount of work to be done in order for this policy to be successful in addressing the need for affordable housing in Cincinnati. Additional feedback from the residents of the communities impacted by this policy, including residents of OTRCH, must be collected via multiple different interfaces so that everyone who can provide feedback is able to. The current policy fails to address how they will evaluate its success after implementation, and the lack of evaluation metrics prevents continued improvement of the policy. Although the Connected Communities policy is a necessary first step in addressing the affordable housing crisis, continued feedback and evaluation of the policy is essential to ensure the needs of the community are being met.