

August 14, 2023

Dear Louisville Metro Council:

We write in support of the Historically Black Neighborhoods Ordinance.

The RVA (Richmond, VA) Eviction Lab is a community responsive data initiative housed in the Wilder School of Government Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. We focus on providing data and research for community partners working to end housing instability across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In cities across the southern US, Black neighborhoods have faced more than a century of displacement due to conditions that were not created by those communities. Whether it was through the placement of noxious uses such as garbage dumps and factories, the refusal to lend in Black neighborhoods or the decision to underinvest in infrastructure such as roads, sewers, storm water management or sidewalks, Black neighborhoods have been devalued through policy. Yet as in the mid-Century when this devaluation and the subsequent poor conditions were used as justifications for Urban Renewal and highway projects, Black neighborhoods in the urban core are facing rapid change and housing precarity.

The history of disinvestment was pointedly not race-neutral. And so the proactive efforts to change the repeated histories of these communities must also engage the issue of race in policy and planning practice. This policy implicitly argues that, while it cannot control market actors, the city can control where, how and with whom it invests. By using the tools the city clearly can control, Louisville can both change the narrative and begin to chip away at its complicity of unequal code enforcement, infrastructure investment and public participation.

We support this legislation and have shared it with local partners because, like the city of Richmond and many other cities across the South, we believe cities can do better. This legislation is a step in that direction.

We hope you will move this legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Benjamin F. Teresa, PhD, Co-Founder, RVA Eviction Lab  
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