

# Builders should listen to neighborhoods about what they want, NYC developer tells MORPC

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The Columbus Dispatch



For years, Denver had an amusement park called Elitch Gardens, 27 acres in the heart of residential neighborhoods on that city's northwest side. In the 1990s, it moved. What to replace it with?

One company wanted to put a big box store there amid the single-family homes. "Living at the edge of this, that's not the best neighbor," New York City-based developer Jonathan F. P. Rose said.

So, Rose's company ended up codeveloping Highlands' Garden Village, a neighborhood that includes 52 single-family houses, 20 carriage homes above garages, 38 townhomes and condominiums, 137 apartments for seniors and everyone else, and 26 live-work lofts. Twenty percent of the homes were to be affordable to households earning up to 50% of the area median income.

Rose was the keynote speaker at Wednesday's Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's State of the Region forum, an annual event being held virtually this year due to COVID-19. This year's program was entitled, "Our Future Envisioned," focusing on a central Ohio region expected to grow 3 million people by 2050 while currently struggling with housing costs.

Rose, the founder of the Jonathan Rose Companies, a real-estate development and planning company, used the amusement park project as an example of how to transform a site into a walkable, environmentally friendly community that respects the neighborhood around it.

Rose said the new single-family homes were placed around the edge of the new neighborhood, so the overall development would better mesh with the nearby bungalow homes.

In Columbus' central neighborhoods, apartment projects have faced backlash from residents who say they don't fit in with the surrounding homes, such as Pizzuti's planned 262-unit apartment project near German Village and Metropolitan Holdings' proposed apartments at Oak and South 18th streets in Olde Towne East.

Rose said he is well aware of the "Not In My Back Yard" or NIMBY response to development, calling it a serious problem.

"We need development models of what is better — architectural excellence," he said. "People don't like big ugly buildings next to them. More development that meets the scale of the neighborhood, feels that it improves the neighborhood."

That strategy, he said, makes a difference.

"I do think it's important to listen to the concerns of neighbors," Rose said. "We really need to build a culture where we're all in it together."

Kerstin Carr, MORPC's director of planning and sustainability, said that the agency is working with the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio to quantify the number of units lost to the region because of strong opposition to development proposals in many communities.

"NIMBYism is a big issue here," she said.

MORPC completed a regional housing strategy in 2020 that outlines ways to reduce housing disparities and increase the amount of affordable housing.

It cites challenges such as increased competition for a limited supply of homes for low-income residents, disparities in lending, and demands for homes that serve a variety of ages and household sizes.

"Because of policies and programs in the past, we have racially and economically segregated communities," Carr said.

Rose said that communities need to plan a vision for 30 years out, preserving space for nature and integrating urban areas with nature, while producing communities that are energy efficient and affordable.

"We really have to take care of our local and regional economies and equalize the landscape of opportunity," he said.

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