

Minneapolis Planner to Describe the Pitfalls of Upzoning

Civic Federation to Host Former Minneapolis Planning Board Vice President Alissa Luepke Pier



“In an effort to alleviate the affordable housing crisis, the city [Minneapolis] is offering my community smaller, crappier housing for no less money, with the added insult to injury of making it harder for them to buy a house and build generational wealth within their own community,”

“The consequences of a policy like this on a community like mine are far too harmful to be glossed over in the name of innovation. Let me be clear: Adoption of this policy without adequate safeguards will cause great harm to low-income families and communities of color, and there is no way to undo the damage once this Pandora’s box is opened.”

Alissa Luepke Pier

As the Montgomery County Council races to adopt Thrive Montgomery 2050, its new 30-year plan, and zoning text amendments to eliminate single family zoning throughout most of the County, we still have a chance to avoid the pitfalls that have plagued these measures in other cities. With the best intentions but without due diligence, Minneapolis voted in late 2018 to allow triplexes on single-family lots. Intended to increase the affordable housing supply and reduce the impact of housing discrimination, these policies have produced unintended consequences.

Architect Alissa Luepke Pier, the former vice president of the Minneapolis Planning Commission, has been sounding the alarm about upzoning since before her city’s plan became law in 2018. Although she supports the policy’s goals, she has witnessed the harm it has caused Minneapolis. Speculative absentee investors have kept driving up the cost of housing, which has doubled in the past five years. Property taxes have risen by 15 to 20% a year despite the number of new units being built. The resulting flight of capital has undermined home ownership and investment in the local economy.

Montgomery County’s proposals are eerily similar to those passed in Minneapolis:

- Aimed to increase homeownership and equity
- By right building of triplexes throughout the County
- Smaller but more expensive (per square foot) units
- Little community input
- One-size-fits-all (not targeted) zoning
- No contingency plan to assess effectiveness

“What a great waste of time and money, and energy it would be to enact a policy that might very well set your city back farther than it started from,” she said. Montgomery County still has a chance to avoid Minneapolis’s mistakes. Bring your questions to our October 11 Civic Federation meeting to find out how!

Zoom recording available of Alissa Luetke Pier's presentation at the Civic Fed. Meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ork670n1XJQ&t=2537s>