

More homeowners file suit over zoning changes

Roanoke Rambler, October 22, 2024

A second lawsuit from Roanoke homeowners is challenging [the city's recent elimination of single-family-only zoning districts](#).

Five homeowners who live in the **Raleigh Court** and **South Roanoke** neighborhoods filed a civil case Oct. 16 in Roanoke City Circuit Court, alleging the city failed to properly notify residents about the significance of a change meant to encourage development of more multifamily housing.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of [a separate April lawsuit](#) that prompted City Council [to redo a vote on the policy](#), which was finalized last month.

Roanoke leaders have said the changes are meant to spur more “missing middle” housing to address a lack of affordable units, while also addressing economic and racial disparities. They note single-family-only zones emerged in the early 20th century as a way to enforce segregation.

The latest lawsuit alleges “there is little empirical evidence that the changes will serve the City’s stated public goals or make a dent in addressing the supply of affordable housing,” but could instead cause increased traffic, noise and parking issues in mostly single-family neighborhoods.

Court records claim the city’s public notices about the issue were inadequate because they did not explain it in a way “that would reasonably inform the public as to the purpose or intent of the changes proposed.” In addition, the homeowners argue that the significance of the changes amounts to a “zoning map classification” change, which requires written notices be mailed to homeowners affected. City officials have previously denied the zoning reforms amount to such a map change.

The residents claim the changes allowing more dense housing will particularly affect them, and “will likely result in higher tax assessments” and “lead to greater traffic on neighborhood streets, increased parking congestion, loss of tree cover, and negative impacts on the character of the neighborhood.” The plaintiffs are listed as **Kristin Way Segelke, Janice Hess, Elaine Hess, W. Chan Bolling** and **Kae N. Bolling**.

City planners estimate the reforms will lead to between 15 and 40 new residences a year across the city.

City Attorney Tim Spencer did not respond Tuesday to a request for comment, though the city often declines to comment on pending litigation.