

LOGAN SQUARE, HUMBOLDT PARK, AVONDALE

Anti-Gentrification Ordinance Protecting Homes Near The 606 And Pilsen Could Be Extended

Logan Square, Humboldt Park and Pilsen alderpeople want to establish a permanent ordinance that charges steep fees to tear down homes near the popular trail.



By Ariel Parrella-Aureli
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Development and homes along The 606 in Logan Square on Nov. 8, 2021, with the Chicago skyline looming above. Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

HUMBOLDT PARK — An anti-gentrification ordinance that has curbed rapid redevelopment near The 606 and Pilsen could be extended as it nears its expiration date.

A demolition surcharge ordinance **approved by City Council in 2021** imposes up to \$15,000 in fees on developers who tear down single-family homes and multi-unit buildings in parts of Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Pilsen, which have seen **rapid gentrification and displacement** in the past decade.

The ordinance was a pilot program that started from a 2015 **grassroots initiative** led by Palenque LSNA youth to see if it effectively curbed gentrification and kept residents in the changing neighborhoods. It is set to expire April 1.

Area Alds. Jessie Fuentes (26th), Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, Daniel La Spata (1st) and Byron Sigcho-Lopez (25th) **introduced an extension to the ordinance** at last month's City Council meeting and anticipate it will be passed by the full council later this month, Fuentes told Block Club.

About \$200,000 in fees have been assessed from the demolition ordinance, Fuentes said. The number of demolition permits near The 606 and in Pilsen have also decreased since the ordinance was passed, according to the **extension filing** that cites data from the city's Department of Housing.

After seeing success from the demolition ordinance, the alderpeople hope it can create a pathway to permanent legislation to expand to more areas of the affected neighborhoods — including others also facing gentrification — and strengthen protections for legacy homeowners, she said.

“[The ordinance] has proven to be extremely successful; it has proven to slow down gentrification, to slow down demolition and to slow down the conversions so that we can allow for more generations and families that have resided in these two- and three-flats to be able to stay in place,” Fuentes said.



People walk along The 606 Trail next to townhouses in Logan Square on Nov. 8, 2021. Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

Between 2013 and 2018, the area near The 606 lost almost 60 percent of 2- to 6-flat buildings, according to The DePaul Institute for Housing Studies.

Parts of Logan Square, Humboldt Park and Avondale **lost more low-cost apartments** than other neighborhoods, according to the institute's **2023 State of Rental Housing** report, an analysis of census data ending in 2021.

A few affordable housing developments in the area are **under construction**, and more have been **proposed** for Humboldt Park and Logan Square — but increased affordable housing stock is of dire need, local officials have said.

Under the ordinance, developers who tear down single-family homes pay a fee of \$15,000, while developers who raze larger, multi-unit buildings get a fee of \$5,000 per unit.

In Logan Square, Bucktown and West Humboldt Park, the ordinance applies to buildings zoned as RS3 and RS3.5 in the area bounded by Armitage Avenue, Western Avenue, North Avenue, Kedzie Avenue, Hirsch Street and Kostner Avenue.

It also includes large swaths of Pilsen.

The fees have gone into the city's Chicago Community Land Trust, an effort aimed at creating a pathway for homeownership for low- and moderate-income Chicagoans.



A rendering of the Encuentro Square project, which will rise at the westernmost end of The 606's Bloomingdale Trail. Credit: DPD

If passed, the updated measure would mark the second time the ordinance has been extended.

The legislation would run through the end of the year so the pilot map can “sunset so we do not leave particular parts of the wards vulnerable” to demolitions. It also allows for the creation of a working group with local community members to determine changes to the ordinance going forward, Fuentes said.

“There is no final termination yet; we filed the extension to give us time to have the conversation,” Fuentes said.

The **anti-deconversion ordinance**, a separate but similar ordinance also passed in 2021 for the same areas, aimed to interrupt the loss of cheap housing stock through deconversions of two- to eight-flat apartment buildings. That legislation was a permanent solution that has also seen success, which goes hand-in-hand with the demolition ordinance, said La Spata.

“The goal was to preserve and encourage multi-family housing, [and] it has done that tremendously well, both in terms of decreasing demolitions and deconversions, to the point where we are considering how could that be reasonably expanded,” La Spata said.

La Spata and other area leaders hope the permanent version of the anti-gentrification ordinance can also make it easier to build more affordable housing.

“All this stuff is to actually do something that feels more like planning and forward reaching, which takes time, so that’s why we’re doing this short-term expansion for now with the hopes of potentially introducing something more comprehensive later in the year,” he said.

The ordinance heads to the Committee on Housing and Real Estate at its next meeting Wednesday and could be approved by council March 20.

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