

HOUSING

New council heavy with homeowners



by **Bill Smith**
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Members of the new Evanston City Council posed with the Mayor and City Clerk Monday night.

The new Evanston City Council chosen by voters April 1 was sworn in Monday night.

Although U.S. Census [survey data](#) indicates 43% percent of Evanston households are renters, the 10 policymakers for the city — the nine council members and mayor — include eight homeowners and only two renters, Ald. Krissie Harris (2nd) and Ald. Bobby Burns (5th).

That's down from three renters on the last council, with the departure of Ald. Devon Reid (8th).

The [Institute for Housing Studies](#) at DePaul University says 25% of the city's housing stock

consists of condominium units, but only one council member, Ald. Matt Rodgers (8th), is a condo owner.

So the 32% of Evanstonians who live in single family homes share a lifestyle with 70% of the council members.

Those disparities may become especially relevant as the new council takes up the Envision Evanston 2045 comprehensive plan and proposed zoning code revisions that advocates say are designed to increase the supply of affordable — and likely multi-family — housing in the community.

The over-representation of homeowners on governing bodies is not limited to Evanston.

A 2022 study in the journal [Housing Policy Debate](#) by researchers from Boston University and the University of Georgia found that at the local, state and federal level homeowners are overrepresented among public officials.

At each governmental level the share of renter-office holders [ranged from 2% to 7%](#).

Nationwide 67% of the housing stock consists of single family homes, compared to 32% in Evanston.

So Evanston's 20% representation of renters among policy-making elected officials — more than twice as high as the national average — appears to reflect the atypical the division in housing types here.

The [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) suggests that many homeowner-officeholders “may lack the perspective needed to understand the struggles of renters” and “may also be biased towards the interests of fellow homeowners.”