

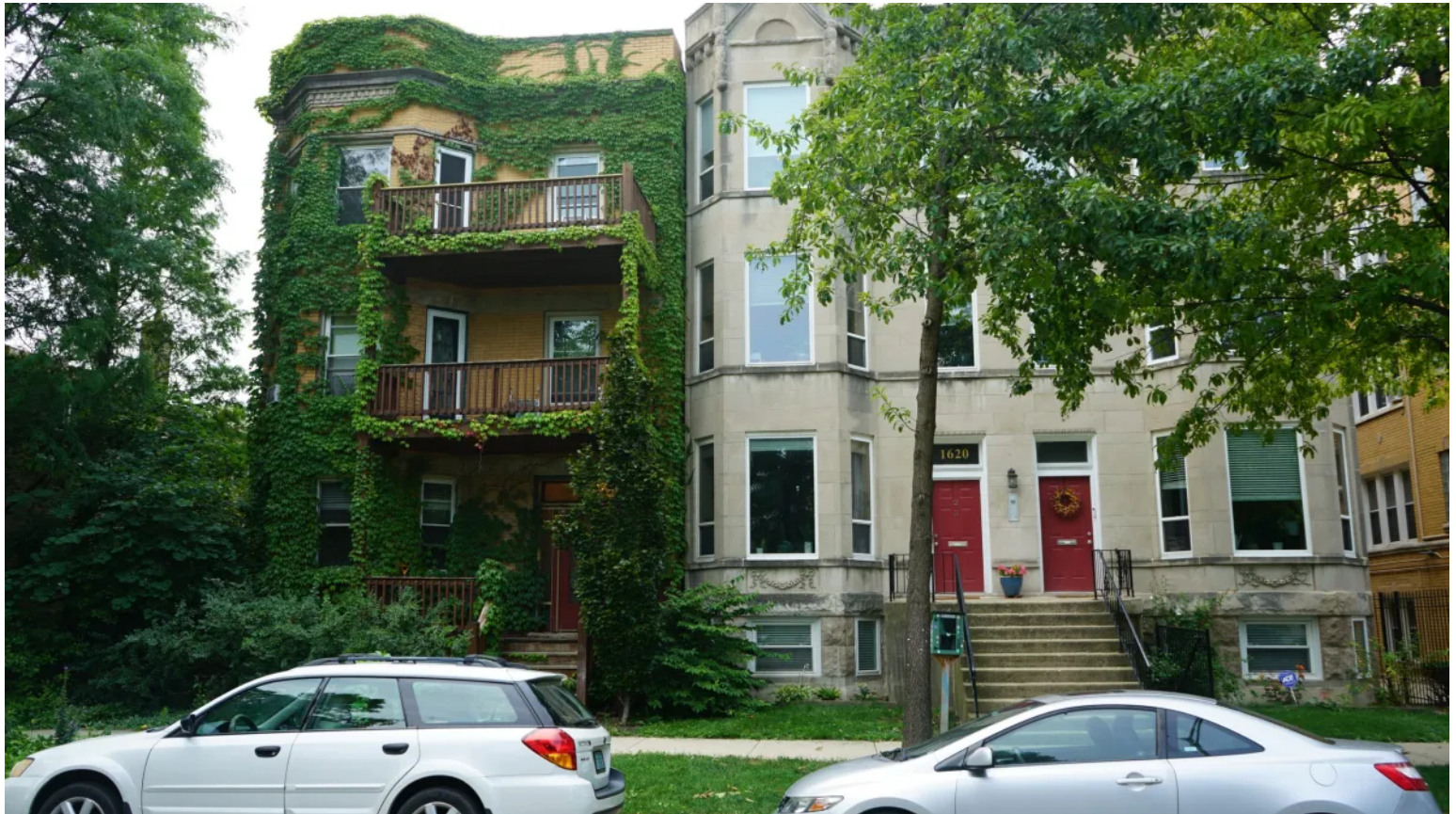
LOGAN SQUARE, HUMBOLDT PARK, AVONDALE

Anti-Gentrification Ordinance To Protect Northwest Side Housing OK'd By City Council

The ordinance builds off two successful pilot programs and goes into effect upon passage and publication, likely in early October.



By Ariel Parrella-Aureli and Melody Mercado
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Homes in the 1600 block of North Humboldt Boulevard in Humboldt Park are seen July 24, 2024. Credit: Ariel Parrella-Aureli/Block Club Chicago

HUMBOLDT PARK — The **Northwest Side Housing Preservation Ordinance** — which aims to protect housing in rapidly gentrifying parts of Hermosa, Logan Square, Avondale, West Town and Humboldt Park — will soon be a reality.

The anti-gentrification **ordinance** was overwhelmingly approved Wednesday by Chicago's City Council, a

victory for Northwest Side leaders and community groups who have been fighting rapid displacement. The new legislation seeks to better protect two-, three- and four-flat apartments and help longtime residents stay in their homes.

The measure was introduced by Aids. Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th), Daniel La Spata (1st), Jessie Fuentes (26th), Byron Sigcho-Lopez (25th), Felix Cardona (31st) and Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez (33rd) in July after working with Palenque LSNA and other community groups.

“The No. 1 concern that I hear every day in my office: ‘I can’t afford to live here anymore. I just got my tax assessment. I’m done. I have to sell because I’ve been priced out.’ [This happens] when you deconvert three-flats, two-flats, four-flats,” Fuentes said during Wednesday’s council meeting.

Fuentes was referencing a trend that began years ago as the area gentrified, which saw multi-family apartment buildings turned into single-family residences that often sell for more than \$1 million.

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Amendment of Municipal Code Titles 5 and 17 by adding new Chapter 5-11 entitled "Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Block (606) District Pilot Program" and by modifying Section 17-7-0590 redefining boundaries of 606 District.
(Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards)

YEA: 44 **NAY: 3** **RECUSED: 0**

Yea	01 La Spata, Daniel	Yea	18 Curtis, Derrick G.	Yea	35 Ramirez-Rosa, Carlos
Nay	02 Hopkins, Brian	Yea	19 O'Shea, Matthew J.	Yea	36 Villegas, Gilbert
Yea	03 Dowell, Pat		20 Taylor, Jeanette B.	Yea	37 Mitts, Emma
Yea	04 Robinson, Lamont J.		21 Mosley, Ronnie L.	Yea	38 Sposato, Nicholas
Yea	05 Yancy, Desmon C.	Yea	22 Rodriguez, Michael D.	Yea	39 Nugent, Samantha
Yea	06 Hall, William E.	Yea	23 Tabares, Silvana	Yea	40 Vasquez, Jr., Andre
Yea	07 Mitchell, Gregory I.	Yea	24 Scott, Monique L.	Yea	41 Napolitano, Anthony V.
Yea	08 Harris, Michelle A.	Yea	25 Sigcho-Lopez, Byron	Yea	42 Reilly, Brendan
Yea	09 Beale, Anthony	Yea	26 Fuentes, Jessica L.	Yea	43 Knudsen, Timothy R.
Yea	10 Chico, Peter		27 Burnett, Jr., Walter	Nay	44 Lawson, Bennett R.
Yea	11 Lee, Nicole T.	Yea	28 Ervin, Jason C.	Yea	45 Gardiner, James M.
Yea	12 Ramirez, Julia M.	Yea	29 Taliaferro, Chris	Yea	46 Clay, Angela
Yea	13 Quinn, Marty	Yea	30 Cruz, Ruth	Yea	47 Martin, Matthew J.
Yea	14 Gutierrez, Jeylu B.	Yea	31 Cardona, Jr., Felix	Yea	48 Manaa-Hoppenworth, Leni
Yea	15 Lopez, Raymond A.	Yea	32 Waguespack, Scott	Yea	49 Hadden, Maria E.
Yea	16 Coleman, Stephanie D.	Yea	33 Rodriguez, Rossana	Yea	50 Silverstein, Debra L.
Yea	17 Moore, David H.	Nay	34 Conway, William		

Everyone in Chambers has voted.

The ordinance saw overwhelming support, with just three voting alderpeople against it: Aids. Brian Hopkins (2nd), William Conway (34th) and Bennett Lawson (44th).

Conway spoke against the ordinance — which doesn’t directly affect his ward — saying it does the opposite of “cutting red tape” to streamline development in the city and calling the initiative a “terrible economic policy.”

“If we as a city want to be cutting red tape and encouraging investment in our neighborhoods, we should not

be constricting the supply of housing, and I believe this will have the opposite effect of what we're trying to do in terms of affordability of housing now," Conway said.

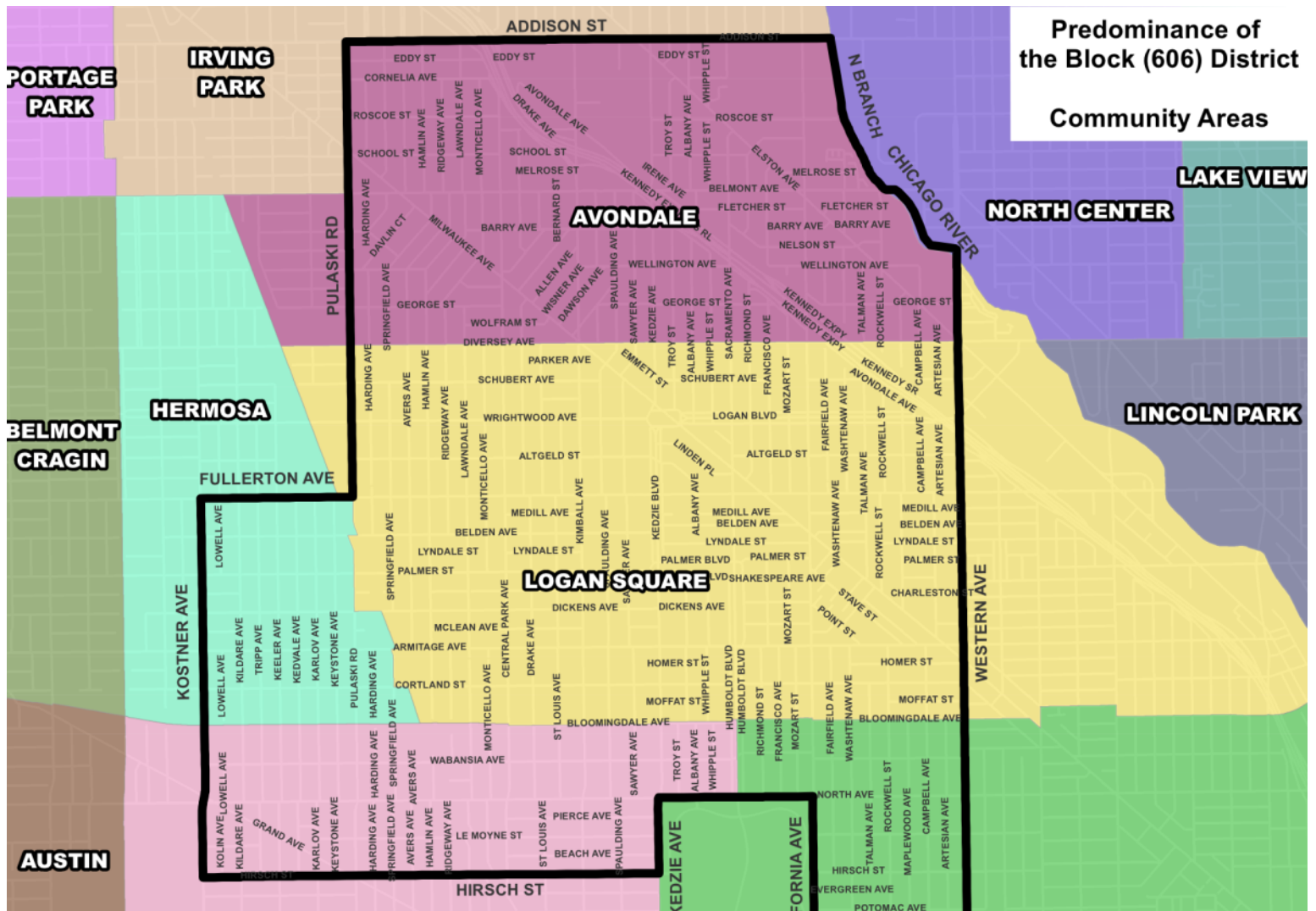
But alderpeople from the Northwest Side who cowrote the policy defended it, saying it is hyperlocal and focusing directly on an issue that's affecting and displacing residents.

"We've been doing our homework, and we know that action must be taken to preserve the housing affordability in our communities," Ramirez-Rosa said at the meeting.

The legislations builds off **two programs** introduced in 2021 that protect two-, three- and four-flats along The 606 and in Pilsen. Originally **passed by council in 2021**, the demolition surcharge pilot law charged developers \$5,000 per unit and \$15,000 per building for tearing down single-family homes and multi-unit buildings in parts of Humboldt Park, Logan Square and Pilsen. The pilot program was **extended twice** and is set to expire at the end of the year.

Under the new legislation, demolition charges jump to \$20,000 per unit and \$60,000 per building.

The fees from the demolition surcharge go to the **Chicago Housing Trust** and the **Here To Stay Land Trust**, groups that preserve affordable housing.



The Northwest Preservation Ordinance will affect buildings within the boundaries of most of Logan Square, Avondale and portions of Hermosa, West Town and Humboldt Park. Credit: 35th Ward Office

The Housing Preservation Ordinance also gives tenants the right of refusal, which means they have the first opportunity to buy their building when it goes on sale. The legislation will also legalize the construction of two-flats by right in all areas currently zoned for single family-housing within the ordinance's boundaries.

"It will protect them from being converted into luxury single-family homes, but we're going even further," Ramirez-Rosa **previously said**. "If you are a tenant and you live in one of those apartment buildings, when your building goes to sale, you will have an opportunity to purchase and you will have the right of first refusal."

Fuentes said Tuesday the 26th Ward has lost hundreds of residents to rising rents and high property taxes.

"Our communities are under real threat of gentrification and displacement," Fuentes said. "Many of our homeowners do not see a future in our communities."

Other measures to preserve Humboldt Park homes **are also in the works**.

Shortly after **The 606 trail was built in 2015**, two- and three-flats along the trail began to be converted into luxury, single-family homes, Ramirez-Rosa said. Between 2013 and 2018, the area near The 606 lost almost 60 percent of its two- to six-flat buildings, according to the DePaul Institute for Housing Studies.

'Enforcement and Education'

Housing advocates, community groups and organizers who helped craft the ordinance celebrated its passage, echoing the importance of better protecting housing stock in the neighborhoods and the benefits of the demolition fees.

Gary Jimenez, one of the main Palenque LSNA organizers who has worked on the legislation since 2022, said he breathed a sigh of relief after Wednesday's meeting. He and his team spent all of the day in council chambers, eager to see the vote. Organizers gathered nearly 1,000 signatures from Northwest Side residents and received support from over 50 community organizations and groups this summer.

"Hearing our alders share personal testimony meant a lot to us; we could not do this without them and without the support from the community," Jimenez said. "I think that celebration is what's on the horizon; but after that, our next step has to be enforcement and education."

Organizers hope to continue educating residents, landlords, developers and others wanting to preserve or build a two-flat in the ordinance boundaries in the coming months, he said.

“It goes to show that these organizing fights are long but they are rewarding,” said Traolach O’Sullivan, another Palenque LSNA organizer who has worked on the effort since 2019. “The market is never going to deliver houses for working-class [families], so we need to make special public policy, and the first part is protecting the affordable houses we do have.”

The Humboldt Park United Methodist Church in Logan Square was one of the community organizations that sent a letter of support for the ordinance. The church has long been a haven for immigrants, having offered affordable housing since 1928, said the Rev. Paula Cripps-Vallejo.

The church is **undergoing a renovation** to increase affordable housing in the area, and the preservation ordinance is an important win for the community and parallels the church’s housing commitment, Cripps-Vallejo said.

“It’s important that we slow down gentrification to make sure Brown and Black families continue to live and thrive in the city,” she said. “Having these two-, three- and four-flats protected is key to making sure Chicago is affordable, and [the ordinance can] build a policy model for the city.”

Fuentes said the ordinance can serve as a model for how to fight gentrification throughout the city.

The ordinance “will help protect the diversity and historic character of our neighborhoods,” Ramirez-Rosa said Tuesday. It will also make it easier to build new two-flats in areas zoned for single-family homes within the ordinance’s boundaries.

The ordinance goes into effect upon passage and publication, likely in early October, he said.

Other alderpeople from outside the Northwest Side spoke to the importance of upholding aldermanic prerogative, wherein alderpeople typically defers decisions that will affect specific wards to the respective alderperson.

“I’m going to support you, and I’ll support you again today with them, because that’s the way it’s supposed to be. Because I’m supposed to advocate for my neighborhood the best way that I know how, like I know that that’s what you’re doing,” Ald. Anthony Napolitano (41st) said at Wednesday’s meeting.

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