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City passes anti-gentrification measures in Pilsen, near 606

Pilsen Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez said they aren't a silver bullet, but the changes will help slow displacement.

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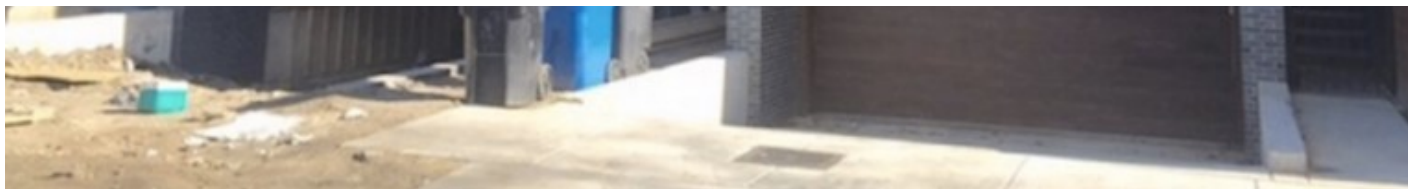
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JAN. 27 UPDATE: Aldermen cleared both measures impacting development in Pilsen and near the 606. Both go into effect immediately.

Earlier:

The Chicago City Council is on track to pass two measures aimed at curbing gentrification in a portion of Pilsen and near the 606, which city officials and one aldermen say are a start, but not a silver bullet to displacement.

The changes impact future deconversions, which turn two-, three- or four-flat buildings into single-family homes. Gut rehabs like those starve gentrifying neighborhoods of "naturally occurring affordable housing," foot traffic to local retailers and school enrollment, Chicago Department of Housing policy director Daniel Kay Hertz told aldermen.

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Pilsen saw 25 such deconversions between 2013 and 2018 (a loss of up to 75 units), and 65 deconversions occurred near the 606 trail west of Western Ave (177 units), according to preliminary estimates from DePaul's Institute for Housing Studies.

The 606 change would apply to certain residential plots bounded by Armitage, North, California, Kedzie and Kostner avenues, and Hirsch Street. Whether a homeowner could put up a single-family home would depend on the mix of single-family and multiunit buildings on their side of the block. No single-family homes can be built if more than 50 percent of the improved lots on the block have established multiunit buildings. Certain zoning groups would allow for a two-flat, townhomes and buildings with more than three units.

The Pilsen district, broadly bounded by 16th Street, Western Avenue, Cermak Road and Peoria Street, would bar construction of all detached houses or two-flats. Both measures are sponsored by Mayor Lori Lightfoot and received the OK from aldermen on the City Council's Zoning Committee today. A final vote at the City Council is expected Jan. 27.

Pilsen Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez, 25th, says the ordinance would help address the "huge issue of displacement," driven by developers, and represents "a step forward to changing the direction in which we're going" that provided neighbors a chance to weigh in.

Ald. Raymond Lopez, 15th, was one of three no votes on the Pilsen measure. Two-flat owners would be prohibited from turning their properties into single-family homes, he said, "even though as a property owner it would be their right to do it anywhere else in the city. This opens the door for starting to dictate to other neighborhoods that people are not in control of their own property."

Paul Colgan, director of government affairs for the Homebuilders Association of Chicago, **previously described** the ordinances as "piecemeal zoning. Instead of having a very certain, consistent rule for developing all around the city, you'll have different rules in narrowly focused neighborhoods

Sigcho-Lopez had pushed back on **a landmark designation** for a significant portion of Pilsen, saying locals were worried it would be too expensive to keep up with historical requirements.

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