

For the record, my name is Richard Girard and I live at two eighty three Orange St.

The planning director's statement that the department and the mayor did more than required to present this document bears scrutiny.

While it's true that every household received a mailed invitation to participate in the online survey, it is also true that the PIN provided each household was not required to participate. The director of the UNH Survey Center told me the city specifically did not want any barriers on who could answer. Having conducted more than a few online surveys, I can tell you that means anybody from anywhere could answer as many times as they wanted and there was no way to know how many times someone took it or where they lived.

The survey results confirm that with a whopping ninety seven percent saying they live in the city, but only half saying they regularly visit city businesses and fewer than a third saying they worked or accessed services here. Those numbers don't add up.

As to the neighborhood meetings, they were infiltrated by so-called housing advocates who not only placed fliers like these at entrances, but also ensured that their members steered the small group conversations towards their desired outcomes in each ward. I experienced this personally in Ward 2, where neighbor pushback on the interlopers elicited confessions from several who admitted they neither lived nor worked here. I heard similar stories from those who attended several other ward meetings.

Also, the ward sign in sheets didn't ask for addresses. The survey center director said the city didn't want any location identifiers. Why would that be?

At the meetings, no survey terms were defined. In Ward 2, "increasing neighborhood walkability" was a runaway favorite. Given the poor condition of many sidewalks, there's little doubt as to why that one was popular. Had the neighbors understood that increasing walkability really

meant adding a variety of business uses to their neighborhood, so as to lessen the need to drive, not fixing the sidewalks, the outcome would have been very different.

It's neither simple nor easy to identify the changes this overhaul makes. That's not a surprise since the department took a zoning ordinance from somewhere in Tennessee and tried to make it fit Manchester. Different zones, definitions, uses, document structure and layout, twice the number of pages, maps of the entire city rather than sections that can be easily compared, etc...make comparison very difficult. However, this rewrite appears to push the density and some business uses of the current R-3 Zone into the R-2 or new M X One zone, and the density and uses of the current Downtown zones into the R 3 or new M X Two zone, while generally reducing the amount of land and parking for any and all residential and some business uses, further increasing density and adding obstacles to vehicle traffic.

All this and nobody's asked perhaps the most important question: Which communities have gone down this road and seen affordability, crime or quality of life improve? There aren't any. Some nearby notables include Lawrence, Lowell, Worcester and Springfield. It's foolhardy to expect Manchester's future will be any different if it does the same thing.

In closing, please allow me to share three short quotes from the Real Clear Investigations articles I asked the clerk to send you. I'm pleading with you to read them because they underscore why what's before you will backfire.

First is this:

"Perhaps counterintuitively, higher density development...does not lower prices...Among 53 major [U S] metros, those with more single-family housing and larger lot sizes...have substantially better housing affordability. The effects of density-focused policies on people and regions are profound."

The next is:

In advocating...high-density housing policies, planners...set themselves against the overwhelming preferences of the public for less density and more spacious housing...”

And Finally,

Trying to force people to live in dense urban areas against their wishes contributes to the continued outflow of people to suburbs...”

We can improve our housing climate without doing things that have been proven to ruin neighborhoods and cause people to leave. Let’s not implement what’s failed other cities like ours and many more.