

Wednesday, April 7, 2010



An important message from the Original Highlands Neighborhood Association regarding the “Homeless Shelter Task Force”

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The “Homeless Shelter Task Force”* is preparing to make their recommendation to Metro Council. This recommendation can be found online at <http://louisvilleky.limehouse.com/portal/homeless>

We believe that there are three major problems with this proposal as it stands today:

1. The density of homeless shelters and transitional housing, especially as it relates to OR-3 zones, is far too high. The formula used is problematic, as it converts dwellings used in the zoning designation to numbers of people or beds. For example, the formula of 400 beds per acre for OR-3 areas could have Mercy (1.76 acres) hosting a 700+ bed homeless shelter. This standard is different than what is used to assess the density of other residential developments, such as apartments. Using this logic, a neighborhood like ours with OR-3 or R6 zoning could be subjected to a 700+ bed motel, as well as a 700+ bed homeless shelter, which would greatly impact and be extremely damaging to the neighborhood.
2. The requirement that facilities only be compliant with the Quality Assurance Surveys (QAS) as administered by the Coalition for the Homeless is entirely inadequate for shelters and neighborhoods. We don't believe the Coalition for the Homeless is impartial enough to administer the surveys and enforce violations nor do we believe that QAS survey results are sufficiently transparent. Indeed, when we requested them, we were told that neither they nor the results are even available to the public. We would like to see Metro government take responsibility for standards enforcement, which is well within the function of government. Inspections, Permits and Licensing (IPL) and similar agencies should be involved to guarantee that our shelters and transitional housing facilities are:
 - a. safe and humane
 - b. structurally sound with the same attention to fire and building codes as other high-density motels/hotels
 - c. that any kitchens receive the same attention and inspections as other public food facilities
 - d. and most importantly - are adequately staffed by professionals who are qualified to successfully deal with the needs of our homeless population.
3. This proposal does not include “buffer zones” between extremely large homeless shelters and low-density residential streets. Some cities have included these “buffer zones” to account for situations just like Mercy, where extremely high density zoning is directly adjacent to low density housing. We believe that homeless shelters or any development that houses more than 100 individuals should have a two block buffer between itself and low-density housing, single family homes, etc.

The public comment period on this proposal ends on April 16th, so it's imperative that you chime in now. We are asking all concerned parties to take action immediately by getting heard and we're asking you to do three things...

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NUMBER 1: Go online and comment here - <http://louisvilleky.limehouse.com/portal/homeless/>

If you are unable to comment on the portal, please write Connie Ewing, 444 S. 5th Street, STE 300 Louisville, KY 40202 or call 502-574-6230

NUMBER 2: Please contact Councilman David Tandy at 502.574.1104 and online at <http://www.louisvilleky.gov/MetroCouncil/>

NUMBER 3: Please contact Councilman Tom Owen at 502.574.1108 and online at <http://www.louisvilleky.gov/MetroCouncil/>

Regardless of what happens with the task force's proposal, this situation has revealed that current zoning for the Broadway corridor, including the Mercy property, as it relates to any housing not just the homeless, is far too dense for our traditional neighborhood. For example, as written in the land development code today, 765 0-bedroom dwelling units (studios?) could be placed at the Mercy location (1.76 acres * 435 dwellings per acre). This must be addressed by appropriate down-zoning which would be consistent with the direction provided by our previously created neighborhood plan, now a part of Cornerstone 2020.

Our association is suggesting that OR-3 and OR-2 zoned areas of the neighborhood be down-zoned to less dense designations, such as OR-1, which would allow up to 61 dwellings based on the current acreage and is a far more appropriate zoning category for Mercy than the current OR-3 and its associated 765 unit maximum. We will begin working towards this goal immediately.

Best Regards,

Chuck Burke
President, Original Highlands Neighborhood Association
502.552.3918
cburke@whizbang.net

* NOTE: Chuck Burke, acting as a representative of OHNA, was initially included in the Homeless Shelter Task Force. He was subsequently removed due to OHNA being a "named party" in Wayside / Mercy's court appeal of BOZA's initial decision (to not allow Wayside to operate out of Mercy).

OTHER RELATED LINKS

Our dedicated website where you can find the history and current news on this issue:
<http://www.HighlandersForResponsibleGrowth.com>

Our neighborhood web site: <http://www.OriginalHighlands.com>

The Homeless Shelter Task Force web site is here:
<http://www.louisvilleky.gov/PlanningDesign/Homeless+Shelter+Task+Force.htm>

The land development code (LDC): <http://www.louisvilleldc.org>