



Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney
Councilmember

MOTION

WE MOVE for the City Administration to cease adding fines associated with code enforcement violations to the property tax bills of residential property owners. WE FURTHER MOVE that the City Administration provide recommendations to City Council to create a program (or set of programs) similar to what was formerly known as the “Harbor Fund”, which provided low-income homeowners with grants to resolve code violations.

WE FURTHER MOVE for this report to be delivered within 14 days following passage of this motion.

Councilmember Jan-Michele Kearney

STATEMENT

We have become aware that property owners, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, are losing their homes. The process seems to be that housing code violation citations and penalties accrue, and then are added to the property owner’s tax bill. When the property owner is unable to pay the tax bill that now includes housing code violation citations and penalties, the property goes into foreclosure. Homeownership in Cincinnati (38%) already is lower than the national average (62%), and even lower for Black, Brown, and low-income communities. Yet, homeownership is a means for families to build wealth, strengthen neighborhoods, and even improve physical and psychological health. My goal is for City Council to increase access to homeownership, including providing opportunities for low-income families. The City must provide financial assistance for homeowners to maintain their property. This motion is a step toward preventing loss of homeownership because further loss exacerbates the existing problem of the low rate of homeownership in Cincinnati.