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Dear Councilman Greg Landsman:

We write to you today our first letter ever to a member of City Council. We are residents of the City of Cincinnati, having lived in the same home since moving here nearly 30 years ago. We raised two children in this home, they attended Cincinnati public schools, and we have always proudly supported tax levies and bond issues for education, the zoo, health care, and literally all other public services. The schools are recognized at the best urban system in Ohio. The Zoo is internationally known for its excellence. And the Public Library every year is one of the most used library systems in the country. These services and organizations **are the reasons we chose to live in the City**. They provide the quality of life we have always sought. Our neighborhood has been both stable – in a good way, with well-maintained century-old houses and its family orientation – and unstable – also in a good way, with a growing diversity in its residents.

However, certain aspects of the property tax abatement enacted by Council have introduced both an instability and an injustice. The abatement on new construction unfairly distributes the tax burden onto the rest of us, those who have committed ourselves to the City, willingly paid our taxes, and maintained our homes. This is in reality not just unfair; it is unjust. Reaction and resistance to injustice is a natural human response. Certainly there are more important injustices to address both nationally and locally. We assure you we do not sit idly by when it comes to the injustices in our criminal justice system, education, health care, poverty, and the environment. But we also cannot ignore our self-interests. Our home, our neighborhood, our city at large are integral to who we are. But the injustices we see and we feel with the current abatement practice affect us deeply, so much so that we have begun to question whether we will stay in the City. The financial impact of essentially paying other people's taxes and the emotional reaction to this injustice we can no longer ignore.

The visible results of the abatement are also disturbing and are constant reminders of the abatement's injustices as we walk or drive through City neighborhoods. Beautiful historic homes, many over 100 years old and built to last centuries, are being demolished, replaced by McMansions, often 3 or 4 on the original lot and constructed to last 30 to 50 years at most. The nature and the beauty of neighborhoods – also among the important reasons we chose to live in the City in the first place – are being destroyed.

We don't doubt that the original intent of new-construction abatement was well-intended. The economy was in recession and the abatement was seen as a catalyst. But as with most actions, there come unintended consequences. Those consequences have persisted too long and must now be stopped. The only beneficiaries are developers, who have exploited the situation. We would be very happy to have only the new-construction abatements rescinded. Abatements for renovations and the addition of green technologies to existing homes continue to make sense. We have no self-interest in such abatements, but they serve in a modest way the greater good of our City and the planet.

The bottom line is: we feel that we are treated unjustly, we see our neighborhoods being destroyed, and we are considering an action we never dreamed would happen: moving out of the City. In the meantime, we will **NOT** vote for another city or county tax levy, not even renewals, until the new construction abatement has been rescinded. In conversations with most of our neighbors, you need to know that we all are "mad as hell" and have options. Most of us are voters. The time for you to act is **NOW!**

Sincerely,

 

Stephen Marine and Barbara Houser
City Residents, Loyal Tax Payers, Furious Citizens, Voters



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