

**8/8/2025: 4:25pm Packet updated to add missing submitted email/letter.**

1

**Letters/emails submitted before the July hearing can be found in the July Plan Commission packet.**

# **CITY OF BLOOMINGTON**



## **PLAN COMMISSION**

**August 11, 2025, 5:30 P.M.  
Council Chambers, Room #115  
Hybrid Zoom Link:**

**<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/82362340978?pwd=ZnExeVNaSUNGVGdZQTJHNjBBb3M0UT09>**

**Meeting ID: 823 6234 0978**

**Passcode: 622209**

**CITY OF BLOOMINGTON****PLAN COMMISSION (Hybrid Meeting)**

❖City Council Chambers, 401 N Morton Street Bloomington – Room #115

August 11, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

## ❖Virtual Link:

<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/82362340978?pwd=ZnExeVNaSUNGVGdZQTJHNjBBb3M0UT09>

Meeting ID: 823 6234 0978

Passcode: 622209

Petition Map: <https://bton.in/G6BiA>**ROLL CALL****MINUTES TO BE APPROVED:** July 14, 2025**REPORTS, RESOLUTIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:****PETITIONS TABLED:****SP-24-22****Cutters Kirkwood 123 LLC**

115 E Kirkwood Ave

Parcel: 53-05-33-310-062.000-005

Request: Major site plan approval to construct a 4-story building with 3 floors of residential units over a ground floor parking garage and retail space in the MD-CS zoning district. The upper floors will consist of 15 dwelling units for a total of 38 beds.

Case Manager: Jackie Scanlan**ZO-34-23****City of Bloomington Planning and Transportation**

Text Amendment

Request: Text amendment related to Sign Standards and request for waiver of second hearing.

Case Manager: Jackie Scanlan**ZO-01-25/RZONE2025-01-005****City of Bloomington Planning & Transportation**

Text Amendment

Request: Text Amendments to Unified Development Ordinance: Affordable Housing Incentives.

Case Manager: Jackie Scanlan**\*\*Next Meeting August 11, 2025****Last Updated: 8/6/2025*****Auxiliary aids for people with disabilities are available upon request with adequate notice.******Please call [812-349-3429](tel:812-349-3429) or e-mail [human.rights@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:human.rights@bloomington.in.gov).***

The City is committed to providing equal access to information. However, despite our efforts, at times, portions of our board and commission packets are not accessible for some individuals. If you encounter difficulties accessing material in this packet, please contact the **Melissa Hirtzel** at [hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov) and provide your name, contact information, and a link to or description of the document or web page you are having problems with.

**PETITIONS:****ZO-03-25/ ZO2025-05-0006****City of Bloomington Planning & Transportation**

Text Amendment

Request: Amendment to amend the Use Table to replace the use “Residential Rooming house” with the use “Single Room Occupancy” and related Use Specific Standards. Case Manager: Eric Greulich

**ZO-18-25/ ZO2025-05-0007****City of Bloomington Planning & Transportation**

Text Amendment

Request: Amendment to the Use Table to add the use “Urban Agriculture, Commercial” and new Use Specific Standards. Case Manager: Eric Greulich

---

**Plan Commission Members**

- Tim Ballard (Appointed by Mayor) – Current term: 1/02/2023 – 01/01/2027
- Flavia Burrell (Appointed by Board of Public Works) – Current term: 01/03/2023-01/02/2027
- Andrew Cibor (Appointed by Planning and Transportation Department) – Current term: 01/01/2024-12/31/2027
- Trohn Enright-Randolph (Appointed by Monroe County Plan Commission) – Current term: 01/04/2024-01/03/2028
- Jillian Kinzie (Appointed by Mayor) – Current term: 01/06/2025-12/31/2028
- Ellen Coe Rodkey (Appointed by Parks and Recreation) – Current term: 01/01/2023-12/31/2026
- Christopher Smith (Appointed by Mayor) – Current term: 01/02/2024-01/01/2028
- Patrick Holmes (Appointed by Mayor) – Current term: 01/02/2024-01/01/2028
- Hopi Stosberg (Appointed by Common Council) – Current term: 01/02/2024-01/01/2028

**\*\*Next Meeting August 11, 2025****Last Updated: 8/6/2025**

**Auxiliary aids for people with disabilities are available upon request with adequate notice.**

**Please call [812-349-3429](tel:812-349-3429) or e-mail [human.rights@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:human.rights@bloomington.in.gov).**

The City is committed to providing equal access to information. However, despite our efforts, at times, portions of our board and commission packets are not accessible for some individuals. If you encounter difficulties accessing material in this packet, please contact the **Melissa Hirtzel** at [hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov) and provide your name, contact information, and a link to or description of the document or web page you are having problems with.

## Case #s ZO-03-25 and ZO-18-25

**To:** Bloomington Plan Commission

**From:** Eric Greulich, Development Services Manager

**Date:** August 11, 2025

**Re:** Use Table Amendments to Unified Development Ordinance

---

The Planning and Transportation Department is proposing a series of amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance that include changes to Section 20.03.020, Table 03-1: Allowed Use Table and other various text amendments related to those changes.

At the July 14, 2025 hearing the Plan Commission voted to have a second hearing for two of the proposed pieces of legislation- ZO-03-25/ZO2025-05-0006 regarding “Single Room Occupancy” and ZO-18-25/ZO2025-05-0007 regarding “Urban Agriculture, Commercial”.

### ZO-03-25 | “Single Room Occupancy”

This amendment is in response to City Council Resolution #2024-25 that directs the Plan Commission to prepare a proposal to amend the text of the UDO to define Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) and to allow their use paying special attention to various items outlined in the resolution. In response to that Resolution, the Department is proposing to remove an existing similar use “Residential rooming house” and replace that with a new use “Single Room Occupancy”. There are also several corresponding changes that need to occur to modify references within the UDO to “Residential rooming house” and replace those with this proposed new use.

At the first hearing the Plan Commission heard comments and questions from members of the community regarding this use including- some support if there was an owner occupancy requirement, questions regarding how occupancy per bedroom was defined, how to insure this is not used for student housing, and possibility for an affordability component.

As was discussed during the first hearing, one of the challenges that was encountered with addressing the goals of the Resolution was insuring that this housing type is not utilized predominately for student rentals. To address that concern, the Department has included language requiring that the owner of the property must live within the SRO or be a registered nonprofit. Additional changes to the current proposal from the first hearing include a revision to the regulation regarding occupancy to state occupancy is limited to two adults per bedroom. In order to not be in possible violation of the Fair Housing Act, the number of children within a bedroom is not proposed to be regulated. Other changes to the proposed legislation from the first hearing include the removal of the prohibition of bathrooms



within individual bedrooms. It was also advised from the Legal Department that we cannot require affordability with a Conditional Use.

ZO-18-25 | “Urban Agriculture, Commercial”

This amendment introduces a new land use- “Urban Agriculture, Commercial”. This new land use would allow some expanded services and offerings within the City for urban agriculture uses beyond the current, similar land use of “Urban Agriculture, Noncommercial”. The new proposed land use would allow for an outdoor education component, on-site employees, and year round retail sales for produce grown on the property. There are multiple sections of the Comprehensive Plan and Climate Action Plan that encourages language within City regulations to promote urban agriculture that support this change. This use is proposed to be a Conditional Accessory use in the R1-R4, RM, and RH districts and a permitted use in all other districts. There are use specific standards included with this use as well.

At the first hearing the Plan Commission heard comments and questions from members of the community regarding this use including- whether it was appropriate within residential neighborhoods, possible additional limitations on maximum number of employees and class size, hours of operation for the use, and height and size of allowed structures.

The proposed legislation includes three changes from what was previously submitted and includes a revision to the allowed hours of operation to restrict the use of power equipment to the hours of 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. A maximum amount of employees or volunteers has also been introduced to limit the number of employees or volunteers to a maximum of 3, regardless of lot size. A maximum amount of registered students has also been proposed to limit the number of students to a maximum of 8, regardless of lot size.

## 20.03.020 Allowed Use Table

**Table 03-1: Allowed Use Table**

P = permitted use, C = conditional use permit, A = accessory use, T = temporary use, Uses with an \* = use-specific standards apply

Additional uses may be permitted, prohibited, or require conditional use approval in Downtown Character Overlays pursuant to Section Error! Reference source not found..

Use	Residential							Mixed-Use								Non-Residential		Use-Specific Standards
	R1	R2	R3	R4	RM	RH	RMH	MS	MN	MM	MC	ME	MI	MD	MH	EM	PO	
RESIDENTIAL USES																		
Residential rooming house Single Room Occupancy	C*	C*	C*	C*	P*	P*		P*	P*	P*	P*	CP*		P*				20.03.030(b)(12)
Student housing or dormitory					C*	P*		P*	C*	P*	P*		P*	C*				Error! Reference source not found.
Supportive housing, small						C			C	C	C		C	C	C			
Supportive housing, large										C	C		C	C	C			
PUBLIC, INSTITUTIONAL, AND CIVIC USES																		
Community and Cultural Facilities																		
Art gallery, museum, or library				C*	C	C			P	P	P		P	P				Error! Reference source not found.

### Use Specific Standards 20.03.030(b)(12)

#### (12) Single Room Occupancy

- (A) The maximum number of bedrooms allowed per building for this use are limited to the following for each zoning district-
  - R1-R4= A maximum of 5 bedrooms are allowed
  - All other districts shall not have a maximum number of bedrooms.
- (B) No bedroom occupied by a person shall be rented for a period of less than 30 consecutive days.
- (C) A maximum of two adults per bedroom are allowed.
- (D) Within the R1, R2, R3, or R4 districts a 150 foot buffer shall be created around the approved Single Room Occupancy (SRO). No newly created or expanded (through addition or habitable space) SRO shall be allowed in said buffer in the R1, R2, R3, or R4 zoning districts for a period of 2 years after the date of the Conditional Use approval. For purposes of this section, the 150 feet shall be measured from the property lines of the parcel receiving approval.
- (E) Unless an exception has been authorized by the Director of Housing and Neighborhood Development or Director of Planning and Transportation, the property owner (or HAND registered agent) shall have no Notices of Violation on file in the Planning and Transportation Department for the prior 3 years of application for Conditional Use approval.

- (F) Within the R1, R2, R3, and R4 districts the owner of the property must live within the dwelling unit or be a registered nonprofit.
- (G) Within the R1, R2, R3, and R4 districts the following design elements of the SRO shall be similar in general shape, size, and design with the majority of existing structures on the same block face on which it is located:
1. Roof pitch;
  2. Front porch width and depth;
  3. Front building setback; and
  4. Vehicle parking access (i.e., front-, side-, or rear-access garage or parking area).

**Table 04-10: Maximum Vehicle Parking Allowance**

Dwelling, multifamily	125 percent of the potential minimum, or 1.25 spaces per bedroom, whichever is less. When there is no required minimum number of spaces, the number of spaces listed per DU in Table 04-9 shall be used in the 125% calculation.
Dwelling, live/work	1 space per DU
Dwelling, cottage development	2 spaces per DU
Dwelling, mobile home	2 spaces per DU
Manufactured home park	2 spaces per DU, plus 1 visitor space per 2 DUs
<b>Group Living</b>	
Assisted living facility	1 space per 6 infirmary or nursing home beds;
Continuing care retirement facility	plus 1 space per 3 rooming units;
	plus 1 space per 3 DUs
Fraternity or sorority house	0.8 spaces per bed
Group care home, FHAA small	1 space per 4 persons design capacity
Group care facility, FHAA large	
Nursing or convalescent home	
Opioid rehabilitation home, small	
Opioid rehabilitation home, large	
<del>Residential rooming house</del> <b>Single Room Occupancy</b>	2 spaces;
	plus 1 space per guest room
Student housing or dormitory	0.75 spaces per bedroom
Supportive housing, small	2.5 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. GFA

## Chapter 20.07.010

### **Bed and Breakfast**

Means a single-family detached dwelling where transient lodging and meals are provided for compensation, that does not meet the definition of a "Hotel or Motel," or "~~Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy**."

### **Dwelling Unit**

One or more rooms containing cooking, living, sanitary, and sleeping facilities, occupied by not more than one family (see definition of "Family"). The dwelling unit shall be characterized by but not limited to:

- 1) A single house number with a single mailbox for the receipt of materials sent through the United States mail;
- 2) A single kitchen adequate for the preparation of meals;
- 3) A tenancy based upon a legal relationship of a unitary nature, i.e., a single lease, mortgage, or contractual sales agreement for the entire premises.

A dwelling unit occupied by more than one "family" (see definition) shall be constructed and regulated as a "~~residential rooming house~~ **Single Room Occupancy**" (see definition).

### **Dwelling, Short-Term Rental**

The rental of an entire dwelling unit for monetary consideration for a period of time less than 30 consecutive days, not including a "Bed and Breakfast," "~~Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy**," or "Hotel/Motel." This definition does not include offering the use of one's property where no fee is charged or collected.

### **Hotel or Motel**

An establishment in which lodging is provided and offered to the public for compensation, for periods of time not exceeding thirty days and that is commonly known as a hotel or motel in the community in which it is located. This use customarily provides services such as maid service, the furnishing and laundering of linen, telephone and secretarial or desk service, and the use and upkeep of furniture. This use may provide ancillary uses such as conference and meeting rooms, restaurants, bars, gift shops, and recreational facilities. The term "Hotel or Motel" does not include "~~Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy**," or "Bed and Breakfast," except where separately permitted.

### **Lodging House**

See "~~Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy**."

### **~~Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy****

A residential facility where individuals rent individual rooms and share common facilities including kitchen, bathrooms, and common area that is occupied by a group of persons, for periods of 30 days or longer, that do not meet the definition of "Family," where the use does not meet the definition of "Bed and Breakfast," "Fraternity or Sorority House," "Student Housing or Dormitory," "Supportive Housing," "Residential Care Facility," or "Hotel or Motel."

### **Student Housing or Dormitory**

A multiple-family dwelling designed primarily as housing for, or likely to be occupied by, unmarried undergraduate or post-graduate students, including but not limited to:

- 4) Multiple-family dwellings that contain any living units with four or more bedrooms; or
- 5) Multiple-family dwellings with more than 10 dwelling units where more than 33 percent of the living units contain three bedrooms; or
- 6) Residential buildings that do not meet the definition of a ~~"Residential Rooming House~~ **Single Room Occupancy** or "Hotel or Motel," in which any of the bedrooms require the use of a common hallway shared by more than three bedrooms, to access the nearest bathroom facilities or to access a cooking area containing a built-in sink, refrigerator, and stove or oven.

For purposes of determining whether a multiple-family dwelling meets this definition, the City may consider the degree to which the facility is occupied by undergraduate or post-graduate students and the degree to which occupancy is marketed to undergraduate or post-graduate students. This use does not include a "Fraternity or Sorority."

## 20.03.020 Allowed Use Table

**Table 03-1: Allowed Use Table**

P = permitted use, C = conditional use permit, A = accessory use, T = temporary use, CA = Conditional Accessory, Uses with an \* = use-specific standards apply

Additional uses may be permitted, prohibited, or require conditional use approval in Downtown Character Overlays pursuant to Section Error! Reference source not found..

Use	Residential							Mixed-Use								Non-Residential		Use-Specific Standards
	R1	R2	R3	R4	RM	RH	RMH	MS	MN	MM	MC	ME	MI	MD	MH	EM	PO	
Club or lodge										P	P			P				
Community center		C	C	C	P*	P*			P	P	P		P	P				Error! Reference source not found.
Conference or convention center											P	P	P	P				
Crematory											C		C			C		
Day-care center, adult or child	A*	A*	A*	A*	C*	C*	C*	P*	P*	P*	P*	C*	C*	P*	P*	A*		Error! Reference source not found.
Government service facility										P	P	P	P	P		P		
Jail or detention facility													C*			C*		Error! Reference source not found.
Meeting, banquet, or event facility										P	P	P	P	P				
Mortuary										P	P		P					
Park	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Place of worship	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	P	P	C	P	P	C			
Police, fire, or rescue station	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Urban agriculture, noncommercial	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*	P*		Error! Reference source not found.
Urban agriculture, commercial	CA*	CA*	CA*	CA*	CA*	CA*	CA*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		20.03.030(c)(6)
<b>Educational Facilities</b>																		
School, college or university											C	C	P					
School, public or private	C*	C*	C*	C*	C*	C*	C*	C*	C*	P*	P*	C*	P*	P*				Error! Reference source not found.
School, trade or business										P	P	P	P	P		P		
<b>Healthcare Facilities</b>																		
Hospital													C		C			
Medical clinic									P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Methadone treatment facility											P*		C*		C*			Error! Reference source not found.
Opioid rehabilitation facility										C*	C*	C*		C*	C*			Error! Reference source not found.

### COMMERCIAL USES

#### Agricultural and Animal Uses

**Table 03-1: Allowed Use Table**

P = permitted use, C = conditional use permit, A = accessory use, T = temporary use, CA = Conditional Accessory, Uses with an \*= use-specific standards apply

Additional uses may be permitted, prohibited, or require conditional use approval in Downtown Character Overlays pursuant to Section Error! Reference source not found..

Use	Residential							Mixed-Use								Non-Residential		Use-Specific Standards
	R1	R2	R3	R4	RM	RH	RMH	MS	MN	MM	MC	ME	MI	MD	MH	EM	PO	
Crops and pasturage	P*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*		A*	A*			Error! Reference source not found.
Kennel											C*					C*		Error! Reference source not found.
Orchard or tree farm, commercial	P	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	A*	P		Error! Reference source not found.

### Use Specific Standards 20.03.030(c)(6)

#### (6) Urban agriculture, commercial

##### (A) Structures

- i. Greenhouses and hoop houses are limited to a maximum height of 20 feet, shall be located at least 10 feet from any lot line and may not cover more than 50 percent of the property.
- ii. Cold frames are limited to a maximum height of four feet and shall be located at least 10 feet from any lot line.
- iii. Agricultural stands are limited to a maximum height of 12 feet and shall be located at least 10 feet from any abutting lot with an occupied residential use.
- iv. Fences intended exclusively to protect food garden plots from animals shall not be more than 12 feet in height. The portion of the fence that exceeds five feet in height shall, by the use of voids and solids via latticework or other similar techniques, be of open construction. This portion of the fence shall be constructed of materials widely accepted in the fence industry for garden protection.

##### (B) Operational Standards

- i. In the R1, R2, R3, and R4 districts only, retail sales shall be prohibited on the commercial urban agriculture site, except for the sale of produce grown on that site in an unprocessed form. Such sales shall be in compliance with Section 20.03.030(h)(4) (Farm Produce Sales) except that there shall not be a limitation on the number of days allowed.
- ii. The site drainage and maintenance shall prevent water and fertilizer from draining onto adjacent property that is not part of the contiguous land in the urban agricultural use.
- iii. Compost piles shall not exceed six feet in height. Refuse and compost area shall be enclosed at ground level to be rodent-resistant.
- iv. Within the R1, R2, R3, and R4 zoning districts, no outdoor work activity that involves power equipment or generators may occur before 8:00 AM or after 7:00 PM.

- v. In the R1, R2, R3, R4, RM and RH districts, a maximum of one employee or volunteer is allowed per minimum lot size of the district on the site. Regardless of lot size, a maximum of 3 employees or volunteers are allowed on one property. There is no limit on the number of employees or volunteers in all other districts.
- vi. In the R1, R2, R3, R4, RM and RH districts, educational classes are allowed on-site with a maximum enrollment per class of 2 people per minimum lot size of the district on the site. Regardless of lot size, a maximum of 8 enrolled students are allowed on one property. There is no limit on the class size in all other districts.
- vii. Activities associated with the use may be conducted within a building or outside.
- viii. One additional drivecut is allowed if the property is larger than 10,000 square feet.

**(C) Soil Quality**

Food products may be sold if grown in soil native to the site if the applicant can provide documentation to the City that the following standards are satisfied:

- i. A composite sample of the native soil, consisting of no less than five individual samples, has been tested for lead content and the lead content in the soil is determined to be at or below the residential screening levels for soil exposure, direct-contact for lead established by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management; and either:
  - 1. Proof through maps, deeds, prior permits or a combination of those sources that the site has only been used for residential or agricultural activities in the past; or
  - 2. A composite sample of the native soil, consisting of no less than five individual samples, has been tested for metal content using the US EPA 3050B, 3051, or a comparable method and that the metals arsenic, cadmium, mercury, molybdenum, nickel, selenium, and zinc are determined to be at or below the residential screening levels for soil exposure, direct-contact established by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.
- ii. If metal content in soil exceeds established thresholds, food products may only be grown in raised beds filled with clean topsoil.
- iii. As an alternative to meeting the standards in (i) or (ii) above, food products may be grown in clean soil brought to the site without completing a soil test of the soil native to the site.

**Definitions 20.07.010**

Urban agriculture, commercial- The cultivation of food and/or horticultural crops, composting, aquaponics, aquaculture and/or hydroponics. Such use may include the production and sale of food products from food grown on the premises and include outdoor educational activities conducted on the property related to Urban Agriculture. Separate plots for cultivation or use by one or more individuals may be farmed collectively by members of the group or rented independently and may include common areas maintained and used by group members. This definition includes both indoor and outdoor educational classes administered on-site, gardens, container gardens, edible landscapes, residential greenhouses, herb gardens, rooftop gardens, berry patches, vegetable gardens and other similar activities. Urban agriculture uses shall not include the raising of animals, except as permitted elsewhere in the Bloomington Municipal Code.



RESOLUTION 2024-25

TO INITIATE A PROPOSAL TO AMEND TITLE 20 (UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE) OF THE BLOOMINGTON MUNICIPAL CODE Re: Single-Room Occupancy Residential Buildings as a Permitted Use

- WHEREAS the Common Council, by its Resolution 18-01, approved a new Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bloomington, which took effect on March 21, 2018; and
- WHEREAS thereafter the Plan Commission initiated and prepared a proposal to repeal and replace Title 20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code, entitled "Unified Development Ordinance" ("UDO") in order to implement the vision for community development put forward in the Comprehensive Plan; and
- WHEREAS on December 18, 2019, the Common Council passed Ordinance 19-24, to repeal and replace the UDO, and the Mayor signed and approved this ordinance; and
- WHEREAS the UDO has since been revised by action of the Plan Commission and the Common Council seven times; and
- WHEREAS there is an insufficient housing supply in Bloomington, especially for low-income households, as described in the Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) Housing Study update of 2024; and
- WHEREAS the Housing Action Plan released in August 2024 by Heading Home of South Central Indiana calls for increasing the number of housing units with rents under \$500/month; and
- WHEREAS according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, a single room occupancy (SRO) unit provides living and sleeping space for the exclusive use of the occupant, but requires that the occupant share sanitary and/or food preparation facilities with others<sup>1</sup>; and
- WHEREAS SROs can provide housing at more affordable rental rates than many other housing types; and
- WHEREAS the Common Council held a deliberative session with the public on September 11, 2024 during which the SRO model was discussed, and participants agreed that allowing such housing could prevent homelessness in some cases and in other cases provide homes for previously unhoused people in Bloomington; and
- WHEREAS pursuant to IC 36-7-4-602, the Common Council may initiate a proposal to amend or partially repeal the text of the UDO and require the Plan Commission to prepare it; and
- WHEREAS the Common Council wishes to initiate a proposal to amend the UDO to allow SROs in the city; and
- WHEREAS in preparing and considering this proposal, the Plan Commission and Common Council shall pay reasonable regard to:
- a) the Comprehensive Plan;
  - b) current conditions and character of current structures and uses in each district;
  - c) the most desirable use for which land in each district is adapted;
  - d) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and responsible development and growth

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The Common Council directs the Plan Commission to prepare a proposal consistent with this resolution to amend the text of the UDO to define Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) and to allow their use, while paying special attention to the following:

- 1) Allowing flexible building types, including conversion of hotels, single-family houses, and commercial spaces;

<sup>1</sup> [Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook](#), Special Housing Types, HUD (November 2020).

- 2) Distinguishing between the existing "Residential Rooming House" use and an SRO, or replacing Residential Rooming House with SRO, while allowing uses that would fall under the RRH definition as well as under the SRO definition;
- 3) Allowing SROs as a permitted use in multiple zoning districts, including residential zoning districts, perhaps with use-specific standards;
- 4) Not requiring owner-occupancy for SROs in any zoning districts;
- 5) Encouraging a diversity of residents including those who need ongoing support and those just seeking a low-cost, simple housing option. SROs should not become another form of group care housing or supportive housing, as those are already defined and allowed in the UDO;
- 6) Allowing SRO units to be integrated into a mixed-use building with other housing types and/or commercial/office space; and
- 7) Allowing two people per SRO.

SECTION 2. Upon passage of this resolution, the Plan Commission shall review and recommend amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to the Common Council in response to this resolution. Pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-4-602, the Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit this amendment in the same manner as any other amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance. The Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit the amendment within 90 days from the effective date of this resolution, unless granted an additional extension of time, of specified duration, in which to prepare and submit the amendment.

SECTION 3. If any section, sentence or provision of this legislation, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be declared invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any of the other sections, sentences, provisions, or applications of this legislation which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this legislation are declared to be severable.

PASSED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 20 day of November, 2024.



ISABEL PIEDMONT-SMITH, President  
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:



NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk  
City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 26 day of November, 2024.



NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk,  
City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this 26 day of November, 2024.



KERRY THOMSON, Mayor  
City of Bloomington

#### SYNOPSIS

This resolution, sponsored by Councilmember Piedmont-Smith, directs the Plan Commission to prepare amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to add Single-Room Occupancy buildings as a permitted use in the City, with further guidance as to what should be considered regarding the definition, location, and use of such structures.

Distributed to: Clerk, Council Attorney, HAND, Legal, Mayor, and Planning & Transportation.

Passed 9-0

RESOLUTION 2025-11

TO INITIATE A PRIOR PROPOSAL TO AMEND TITLE 20 (UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE) OF THE BLOOMINGTON MUNICIPAL CODE BY RESTATING RESOLUTION 2024-25 Re: Single-Room Occupancy Residential Buildings as a Permitted Use

- WHEREAS the Common Council, by its Resolution 18-01, approved a new Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bloomington, which took effect on March 21, 2018; and
- WHEREAS thereafter the Plan Commission initiated and prepared a proposal to repeal and replace Title 20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code, entitled "Unified Development Ordinance" ("UDO") in order to implement the vision for community development put forward in the Comprehensive Plan; and
- WHEREAS on December 18, 2019, the Common Council passed Ordinance 19-24, to repeal and replace the UDO, and the Mayor signed and approved this ordinance; and
- WHEREAS the UDO has since been revised by action of the Plan Commission and the Common Council several times; and
- WHEREAS there is an insufficient housing supply in Bloomington, especially for low-income households, as described in the Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) Housing Study update of 2024; and
- WHEREAS the Housing Action Plan released in August 2024 by Heading Home of South Central Indiana calls for increasing the number of housing units with rents under \$500/month; and
- WHEREAS according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, a single room occupancy (SRO) unit provides living and sleeping space for the exclusive use of the occupant, but requires that the occupant share sanitary and/or food preparation facilities with others<sup>1</sup>; and
- WHEREAS SROs can provide housing at more affordable rental rates than many other housing types; and
- WHEREAS the Common Council held a deliberative session with the public on September 11, 2024 during which the SRO model was discussed, and participants agreed that allowing such housing could prevent homelessness in some cases and in other cases provide homes for previously unhoused people in Bloomington; and
- WHEREAS pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-4-602, the Common Council may initiate a proposal to amend or partially repeal the text of the UDO and require the Plan Commission to prepare it; and
- WHEREAS the Common Council passed Resolution 2024-25 ("Attachment A") to initiate a proposal to amend the UDO to allow SROs in the city; and
- WHEREAS the Common Council renews its intention to initiate the proposal set forth in

<sup>1</sup> Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook, Special Housing Types, HUD (November 2020).



Resolution 2024-25(“Attachment A”) and restates the proposed amendments to the UDO herein; and

WHEREAS in preparing and considering this proposal, the Plan Commission and Common Council shall pay reasonable regard to:

- a) the Comprehensive Plan;
- b) current conditions and character of current structures and uses in each district;
- c) the most desirable use for which land in each district is adapted;
- d) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and responsible development and growth.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The Common Council hereby restates the content of Resolution 2024-25 (“Attachment A”):


“SECTION 1. The Common Council directs the Plan Commission to prepare a proposal consistent with this resolution to amend the text of the UDO to define Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) and to allow their use, while paying special attention to the following:

- 1) Allowing flexible building types, including conversion of hotels, single-family houses, and commercial spaces;
- 2) Distinguishing between the existing “Residential Rooming House” use and an SRO, or replacing Residential Rooming House with SRO, while allowing uses that would fall under the RRH definition as well as under the SRO definition;
- 3) Allowing SROs as a permitted use in multiple zoning districts, including residential zoning districts, perhaps with use-specific standards;
- 4) Not requiring owner-occupancy for SROs in any zoning districts;
- 5) Encouraging a diversity of residents including those who need ongoing support and those just seeking a low-cost, simple housing option. SROs should not become another form of group care housing or supportive housing, as those are already defined and allowed in the UDO;
- 6) Allowing SRO units to be integrated into a mixed-use building with other housing types and/or commercial/office space; and
- 7) Allowing two people per SRO.


SECTION 2. Upon passage of this resolution, the Plan Commission shall review and recommend amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to the Common Council in response to this resolution. Pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-4-602, the Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit this amendment in the same manner as any other amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance. The Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit the amendment in compliance with the timelines in Indiana Code 36-7-4-607, unless granted an additional extension of time, of specified duration, in which to prepare and submit the amendment.

SECTION 3. If any section, sentence or provision of this legislation, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be declared invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any of the other sections, sentences, provisions, or applications of this legislation which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this legislation are declared to be severable.”


PASSED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 16 day of July, 2025.

  
 HOPI STOSBERG, President  
 Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

  
 NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk  
 City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 18 day of July, 2025.

  
 NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk,  
 City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this 12 day of July, 2025.

  
 KERRY THOMSON, Mayor  
 City of Bloomington

#### SYNOPSIS

This resolution, sponsored by Councilmember Piedmont-Smith, initiates the prior proposal in Resolution 2024-25 (adopted on November 20, 2024), which directs the Plan Commission to prepare amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to add Single-Room Occupancy buildings as a permitted use in the City, with further guidance as to what should be considered regarding the definition, location, and use of such structures.

Distributed to: Clerk, Council Attorney, HAND, Legal, Mayor, and Planning & Transportation.

RESOLUTION 2024-25

TO INITIATE A PROPOSAL TO AMEND TITLE 20 (UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE)  
OF THE BLOOMINGTON MUNICIPAL CODE Re: Single-Room Occupancy Residential Buildings  
as a Permitted Use

- WHEREAS
- the Common Council, by its [Resolution 18-01](#), approved a new Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bloomington, which took effect on March 21, 2018; and
- WHEREAS
- thereafter the Plan Commission initiated and prepared a proposal to repeal and replace Title 20 of the Bloomington Municipal Code, entitled "Unified Development Ordinance" ("UDO") in order to implement the vision for community development put forward in the Comprehensive Plan; and
- WHEREAS
- on December 18, 2019, the Common Council passed [Ordinance 19-24](#), to repeal and replace the UDO, and the Mayor signed and approved this ordinance; and
- WHEREAS
- the UDO has since been revised by action of the Plan Commission and the Common Council seven times; and
- WHEREAS
- there is an insufficient housing supply in Bloomington, especially for low-income households, as described in the Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) Housing Study update of 2024; and
- WHEREAS
- the Housing Action Plan released in August 2024 by Heading Home of South Central Indiana calls for increasing the number of housing units with rents under \$500/month; and
- WHEREAS
- according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, a single room occupancy (SRO) unit provides living and sleeping space for the exclusive use of the occupant, but requires that the occupant share sanitary and/or food preparation facilities with others<sup>1</sup>; and
- WHEREAS
- SROs can provide housing at more affordable rental rates than many other housing types; and
- WHEREAS
- the Common Council held a deliberative session with the public on September 11, 2024 during which the SRO model was discussed, and participants agreed that allowing such housing could prevent homelessness in some cases and in other cases provide homes for previously unhoused people in Bloomington; and
- WHEREAS
- pursuant to IC 36-7-4-602, the Common Council may initiate a proposal to amend or partially repeal the text of the UDO and require the Plan Commission to prepare it; and
- WHEREAS
- the Common Council wishes to initiate a proposal to amend the UDO to allow SROs in the city; and
- WHEREAS
- in preparing and considering this proposal, the Plan Commission and Common Council shall pay reasonable regard to:

a) the Comprehensive Plan;

b) current conditions and character of current structures and uses in each district;

c) the most desirable use for which land in each district is adapted;

d) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and responsible development and growth

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The Common Council directs the Plan Commission to prepare a proposal consistent with this resolution to amend the text of the UDO to define Single Room Occupancy buildings (SROs) and to allow their use, while paying special attention to the following:

- 1) Allowing flexible building types, including conversion of hotels, single-family houses, and commercial spaces;

<sup>1</sup> [Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook](#), Special Housing Types, HUD (November 2020).

- 2) Distinguishing between the existing “Residential Rooming House” use and an SRO, or replacing Residential Rooming House with SRO, while allowing uses that would fall under the RRH definition as well as under the SRO definition;
- 3) Allowing SROs as a permitted use in multiple zoning districts, including residential zoning districts, perhaps with use-specific standards;
- 4) Not requiring owner-occupancy for SROs in any zoning districts;
- 5) Encouraging a diversity of residents including those who need ongoing support and those just seeking a low-cost, simple housing option. SROs should not become another form of group care housing or supportive housing, as those are already defined and allowed in the UDO;
- 6) Allowing SRO units to be integrated into a mixed-use building with other housing types and/or commercial/office space; and
- 7) Allowing two people per SRO.

SECTION 2. Upon passage of this resolution, the Plan Commission shall review and recommend amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to the Common Council in response to this resolution. Pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-4-602, the Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit this amendment in the same manner as any other amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance. The Plan Commission is instructed to prepare and submit the amendment within 90 days from the effective date of this resolution, unless granted an additional extension of time, of specified duration, in which to prepare and submit the amendment.

SECTION 3. If any section, sentence or provision of this legislation, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be declared invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any of the other sections, sentences, provisions, or applications of this legislation which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this legislation are declared to be severable.

PASSED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
ISABEL PIEDMONT-SMITH, President  
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk  
City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk,  
City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
KERRY THOMSON, Mayor  
City of Bloomington

SYNOPSIS

This resolution, sponsored by Councilmember Piedmont-Smith, directs the Plan Commission to prepare amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to add Single-Room Occupancy buildings as a permitted use in the City, with further guidance as to what should be considered regarding the definition, location, and use of such structures.



Eric Greulich <greulice@bloomington.in.gov>

---

## [BCOS] Local Food Resilience Presentation

---

Jami Scholl <wellbeing@rezenience.com>

Sun, Jul 20, 2025 at 7:01 PM

To: greulice@bloomington.in.gov, hopi.stosberg@bloomington.in.gov, "david.hittle@bloomington.in.gov" <david.hittle@bloomington.in.gov>, "scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov" <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, planning@bloomington.in.gov, "andrew.cibor@bloomington.in.gov" <andrew.cibor@bloomington.in.gov>

Hello Plan Commission members,

I hope this message finds you well.

It was recently brought to my attention that Planning's proposed updates—particularly those related to *Urban Agriculture - Commercial*—may align with initiatives that may be of interest to you. I wanted to share a recent presentation that touches on this theme, beginning at the following timestamp:

<https://youtu.be/hjRFUwJEaZQ?si=JHL3KcgsQQvxBsK5&t=2791>

My involvement with Urban Agriculture in Bloomington began in 2008. I was featured in the *Herald-Times* and other outlets in 2012 for related community projects. I was also a founding board member of the Bloomington Community Orchard and was later asked to help organize the Bloomington Food Policy Council. This was largely due to my work on the Urban Agriculture Amendment (which was eventually incorporated into the UDO) and the effort to revise the Chicken Ordinance.

Some of you may recall the December 2011 City Council meeting that extended nearly to midnight. That vote removed the fee requirement for chicken flocks, eliminated the need for contiguous neighbor consent, and permitted on-site butchering. Since then, the ordinance has been revisited periodically, including discussion around increasing the number of hens allowed per household (currently 5). In this video you'll become aware that I presented a resolution to increase chicken flock sizes based on the size of a lot, which was passed unanimously at the first reading, and will be heard for final vote on Tuesday, August 12th.

Bloomington residents have continued to support and adapt to these changes and consistently express a growing interest in advancing home- and community-based sustainability. I share this history and the recent meeting in the hope that it may help inform your current efforts and highlight the strong public support for thoughtful, forward-looking urban agriculture policy.

Kind regards,

**Jami Scholl CHWC**

Commissioner, Bloomington Commission on Sustainability  
Health Coach, Grower & Garden Consultant



REZENIENCE

Health. Humans. Habitat.

[www.rezenience.com](http://www.rezenience.com)



Dear Members of the Bloomington Planning Commission,

We write to oppose the “Urban Agriculture, **Commercial**” UDO proposal. We have argued our position in previous filings with the City, which are part of the public record. As such, we will minimize repetition. We have arrived at the position we state above as we have personal experience with a neighborhood farm with such goals on our street. We share our experience with you to shed some light on the issues that the passage of this amendment might cause in the city at large. It is clear from disclosure of events in recent months that this change in the law has been initiated by our neighbor, Ellee Spier. As we are neighbors who will be directly affected by the passage of this amendment, we have been drawn into talking about our specific situation. What we are experiencing—a large-scale farming operation with the ambition of hiring agricultural support staff, holding classes and tours on the property--could well be mirrored on other streets in the city. The goals of those wanting to expand and promote commercial enterprises are in contradiction to those of neighbors who are looking for a residential environment. We believe it likely that approving such operations in the midst of existing neighborhoods will cause more of these vexing situations where Bloomington residents might find themselves living right next to a big farm. It has caused discord on our street. Why does this need to happen? There is no shortage of land surrounding our small town for those who are interested in starting their own commercial farms/schools and addressing food and sustainability goals. Bloomington residents are free to grow vegetable gardens on their properties, but there are no additional sustainability goals to be accomplished for these gardens to turn into commercial operations.

We urge the City planners to think very seriously about the impact of the potential changes in zoning laws on neighborly relations in residential neighborhoods. One of the primary aspirations for anyone buying a home is to enjoy their private lives, but also to become part of a community. Community is a basic social need, but it rests on the principle of mutual respect and a **balance of one's own rights with those of others**. To live in a society means that no one has absolute liberty to do as they please. We are bound by laws that place limits on each of our individual rights so that we can all enjoy certain rights. An extreme position of personal liberty does not have a place in neighborly coexistence. To ridicule anyone asking for restraints to be placed on a particular household's desires to do as they please in terms of NIMBYism is simplistic, if not outright dismissive. We all have a stake in what happens in our backyards. On our street, when the Spiers have engaged in conversations with neighbors in the past, it has always been cast as their various projects achieving their dreams, without ever recognizing that their neighbors might have their own dreams as well. Any expression of our wishes in such conversations, which have been open and civil, has always been interpreted by them as obstructing their dreams. The arbitration of the rights (and dreams) of the many is the role of government. As such, we ask city planners to take

seriously our concerns about the changes they are contemplating to existing laws. There **must** be a good reason to change an existing law.

We are still puzzled by how the City government struck an agreement with one Bloomington household. We understand that the threat of litigation might have played a part, but this is an outcome of great concern. Will our local government be held hostage to the loudest, most persistent, and litigious residents? We understand the power of activist national organizations of all stripes. Is this the road our City is going down? Must we all now resort to such tactics of intimidation to have our way? It would not bode well for the city.

The Spiers have maintained that they had no interest in teaching anyone, but were forced to go down this path because of overwhelming interest. The establishment of Garden Q early on in the family's move to Brooks Drive belies the happenstance account of their decision to teach on their property. We don't doubt that people have asked them questions about their agricultural techniques or, for that matter, their expertise. However, if they want to share their wisdom on farming, we want them to fulfill that mission at an appropriate public setting. It simply does not **have** to be on their residential property. And it was not a good idea in the first place to make all this investment on their property knowing fully well that it was not zoned for these activities.

We hope that the City will give neighbors on Brooks Drive the same consideration they already have given to our neighbors, the Spiers. We do not have any personal animus toward the Spiers, but have been drawn to express our reservations on the significant legal changes they are pursuing. We are making a case for our position just as they are for theirs. And we are asking the City to adjudicate.

Finally, we ask that if the City were to proceed with some form of approval of urban agriculture, there needs to be at a minimum the requirement of a privacy fence that provides a screen for the neighbors from the activities of the enterprise.

Thank you for considering our remarks and for your work for the city of Bloomington.

Indermohan Virk  
Art Alderson  
(1301 S Brooks Drive)



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Fwd: [Planning] Proposed Zoning Ordinance ZO-18-25**

---

**LeAnna Faubion** <leanna.faubion@bloomington.in.gov>

Mon, Jul 28, 2025 at 2:53 PM

To: Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alyssa Huston** <alyssachuston@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jul 28, 2025 at 2:50 PM

Subject: [Planning] Proposed Zoning Ordinance ZO-18-25

To: &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Dear City of Bloomington Officials,

I'm writing to express strong support for expanding urban agriculture and sustainability initiatives in our city.

Urban farms like GardenQuest are vital assets. They address food insecurity in underserved neighborhoods, reduce food waste through innovative pilots like Bokashi composting, and empower residents with the tools and knowledge to grow their own food. These initiatives also improve community health, provide youth employment, and strengthen local

Had I not been connected to Ellee Spier at GardenQuest, I would not have attempted composting. When education and resources are embedded within neighborhoods, success and long-term engagement become far more likely.

Urban agriculture also plays a critical role in environmental and climate resilience—helping manage stormwater, reduce the heat island effect, and increase green space. As Bloomington continues to grow, supporting neighborhood-based farming will help ensure a more self-sufficient, healthy, and connected city.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering increased investment in local urban agriculture programs.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Huston

--

LeAnna Faubion  
Administrative Assistant  
Planning And Transportation  
Phone # 812-349-3423  
[401 N Morton St.](#)  
[Bloomington, IN 47404](#)



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Fwd: [Planning] Submission of a letter for the packet for the next Bloomington Plan Commission meeting

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

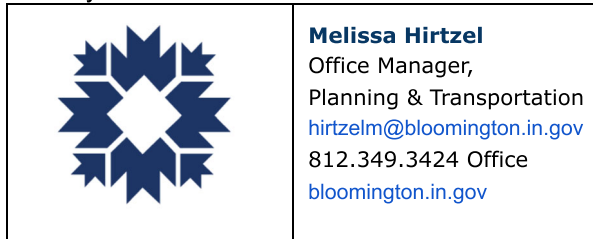
Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 10:35 AM

To: Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Planning Department &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hi Eric,

Here is a statement to be included in the PC packet.

Thank you!



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Craig Stewart** <[cas@pobox.com](mailto:cas@pobox.com)>

Date: Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 10:31 AM

Subject: [Planning] Submission of a letter for the packet for the next Bloomington Plan Commission meeting

To: Melissa Hirtzel <[hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov)>, <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)>Cc: Craig Stewart <[cas@pobox.com](mailto:cas@pobox.com)>

Dear Ms. Hirtzel and Bloomington Plan Commission members,

Attached is a letter intended for inclusion in the packet prepared for the August meeting of the Bloomington Plan Commission. It opposes the current proposed ordinance regarding commercial urban agriculture.

I did not include an actual scan of my signature, because this eventually ends up on the Internet. If that's not o.k. please let me know.

And again: thank you.

Sincerely,

Craig Stewart

**UDO urban agriculture letter 2025\_jul\_30.pdf**  
206K



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Fwd: [Planning] Submission of a letter for the packet for the next Bloomington Plan Commission meeting

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

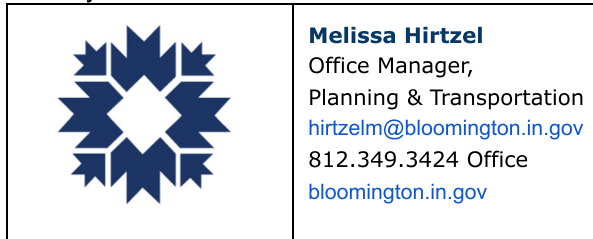
Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 10:35 AM

To: Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Planning Department &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hi Eric,

Here is a statement to be included in the PC packet.

Thank you!



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Craig Stewart** <[cas@pobox.com](mailto:cas@pobox.com)>

Date: Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 10:31 AM

Subject: [Planning] Submission of a letter for the packet for the next Bloomington Plan Commission meeting

To: Melissa Hirtzel <[hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov)>, <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)>Cc: Craig Stewart <[cas@pobox.com](mailto:cas@pobox.com)>

Dear Ms. Hirtzel and Bloomington Plan Commission members,

Attached is a letter intended for inclusion in the packet prepared for the August meeting of the Bloomington Plan Commission. It opposes the current proposed ordinance regarding commercial urban agriculture.

I did not include an actual scan of my signature, because this eventually ends up on the Internet. If that's not o.k. please let me know.

And again: thank you.

Sincerely,

Craig Stewart

**UDO urban agriculture letter 2025\_jul\_30.pdf**

206K



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Fwd: [Planning] Ellee Spear and family**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtelm@bloomington.in.gov>

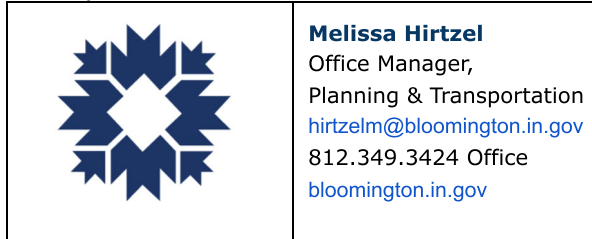
Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:44 AM

To: Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Planning Department &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hi Eric,

Here is another one!

Thank you,



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **'Robert Todd' via Planning Department** <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)>

Date: Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:43 AM

Subject: [Planning] Ellee Spear and family

To: <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)>

Dear Planning,

I live about a block away from Ellee and her farm. Her stated goals *in se* are admiral. I like them. Never the less, their operations seem quite inconsistent with our neighborhood. We have a residential neighborhood not an agricultural neighborhood. It feels like the Spear family wants the entire neighborhood to accommodate them to change the rules of a residential neighborhood; yet the Spear family knew the rules and residential zoning when they moved into the neighborhood. They could easily move to an agricultural location in the nearby county and accomplish all of her goals without all of these troubles.

Rob Todd



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Fwd: [Planning] Janet Barrows Pickwick PI**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

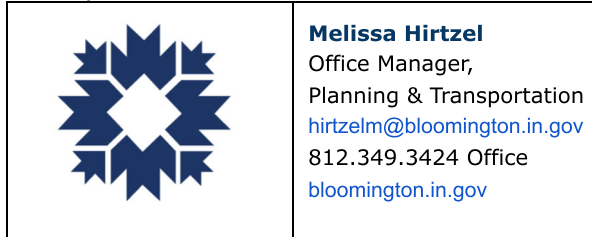
Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:16 AM

To: Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Planning Department &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hi Eric,

This is for the PC packet.

Thank you!



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **janet barrows** <[barrowsjanet@gmail.com](mailto:barrowsjanet@gmail.com)>

Date: Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:14 AM

Subject: [Planning] Janet Barrows Pickwick PI

To: <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)>

I am against the changes the Spier family is requesting. While her plans are altruistic the location is not the right one. As Fernandez said: Good plan but wrong place. Her plans have created a lot of consternation in the neighborhood - and passing the request puts Bloomington at risk for commercial businesses in every neighborhood. BAD IDEA.

[janet barrows](#)  
[1205 S Pickwick](#)  
[Bloomington, IN 47401](#)  
[812.325.3031](#)  
[barrowsjanet@icloud.com](mailto:barrowsjanet@icloud.com)



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

## Opposition to Commercial Urban Farming Zoning Amendment

2 messages

Hadar Karmazyn &lt;hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Aug 4, 2025 at 7:49 AM

To: david.brantez@bloomington.in.gov, joy.brown@bloomington.in.gov, jennifer.burrell@bloomington.in.gov, hank.duncan@bloomington.in.gov, leanna.faubion@bloomington.in.gov, katie.gandhi@bloomington.in.gov, greulice@bloomington.in.gov, hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov, david.hittle@bloomington.in.gov, gabriel.holbrow@bloomington.in.gov, rachael.johnson@bloomington.in.gov, martipa@bloomington.in.gov, joe.patterson@bloomington.in.gov, karina.pazos@bloomington.in.gov, robtingr@bloomington.in.gov, Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, Dave Rollo <rolod@bloomington.in.gov>, arnoldm@bloomington.in.gov, rob.council@bloomington.in.gov, rebecca.davis@bloomington.in.gov, finleyc@bloomington.in.gov, chastina.hayes@bloomington.in.gov, anna.killionhanson@bloomington.in.gov, lifordk@bloomington.in.gov, stongj@bloomington.in.gov, planning@bloomington.in.gov, desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov, gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov, april.rosenberger@bloomington.in.gov, margaret.vanschaik@bloomington.in.gov, atentro@bloomington.in.gov, cartere@bloomington.in.gov, mayor@bloomington.in.gov

Dear Plan Commission,

My name is Hadar Raz, I am Spier's next-door neighbor, and I strongly oppose the citywide "urban agriculture, commercial" zoning amendment. While the concept of citywide urban farming appeals to many—much like the universal enjoyment of music—unregulated enthusiasm can lead to unintended consequences. Just as excessive noise becomes unpleasant and is subject to municipal regulation and complaint procedures, urban agriculture, when not properly managed, can result in significant nuisances and health hazards. Below, I outline my concerns, **supported by peer-reviewed research**, and propose regulatory measures to address the negative impacts of allowing such private urban farming businesses.

### City Wide Urban Farming:

Unregulated urban farms can become breeding grounds for pests and insects, including mosquitoes, flies, and crop-eating bugs, increasing the risk of infestations in adjacent homes and public spaces. Studies have documented that urban agriculture can create "hot spots" for nuisance and disease-vector insects, and improper management of compost or standing water exacerbates these risks (Philpott et al., 2020; Schmelzkopf, 2002). Increased insect populations can also contribute to the rise of vector-borne diseases in urban environments (LaDeau et al., 2013). Such nuisances can diminish the quality of life in residential areas, as noted in research by Poulsen et al. (2017), which emphasizes the need for community-informed regulations to address such conflicts. Just as the city enforces noise ordinances to limit disruptive sound levels (e.g., decibel restrictions and police response to complaints), the UDO should implement specific constraints on urban farming to mitigate its potential harms.

### Brooks drive urban farming:

The Spiers' property is a great example for unregulated and poorly kept urban farms. The farm resembles a junkyard, with disorganized structures like a poorly constructed bike station that detracts from the neighborhood's visual appeal. My front-facing windows—not backyard—overlooks this eyesore daily, diminishing my quality of life. Research by Poulsen et al. (2017) highlights that poorly managed urban agriculture sites can create aesthetic conflicts, leading to **community dissatisfaction and reduced property values**. The lack of maintenance on the Spiers' lot exemplifies this issue.

Furthermore, The Spiers' urban farming, while valuable and inspiring, should not be imposed on a residential community through private businesses that disrupt the neighborhood's character. For example, the Spiers maintenance of multiple beehives, created significant disruptions for our outdoor spaces. When we set up a small pool for our children to play in, bees from their hives hover around, posing a health risk to my son and his friends that come to play. Despite our appreciation for the ecological role of bees, it is important to



regulate beehives, as research by Sponsler et al. (2017) highlights that urban beekeeping, particularly with multiple hives, can lead to excessive bee populations that **disrupt nearby residents** and pose risks to those with allergies. As noted by Taylor and Lovell (2014), urban agriculture on private lots often prioritizes individual agendas over community needs, creating tension rather than fostering collaboration.

Finally, I am puzzled by the Spiers' aggressive push for a citywide commercial urban farming, given that their property is in a residentially zoned area. Their threat to pursue a lawsuit, backed by a national non-profit, to force this zoning amendment is **coercive and undermines community consensus**. The city of Bloomington already provides equitable opportunities for urban gardening in public spaces, which are accessible to all and better suited for educational purposes. Public gardens allow participants to engage comfortably, with clear access to crops they plant—e.g., checking or harvesting tomatoes at their convenience. In contrast, a private business model raises concerns about restricted access and potential exploitation. For instance, students paying for lessons may inadvertently provide free labor for the Spiers' garden **under the guise of education**. A study by Cohen and Reynolds (2014) warns that urban farming initiatives can exploit participants when structured as for-profit ventures, particularly when labor contributions are not equitably rewarded.

In conclusion, While urban farming can benefit communities, allowing private properties like the Spiers' to operate as commercial enterprises without stringent regulations creates significant challenges for neighbors. The city's existing public gardening programs offer a more equitable and less intrusive alternative for promoting urban agriculture. By implementing evidence-based constraints, the city can balance the benefits of urban farming with the rights of residents to a peaceful and aesthetically pleasing neighborhood.

Thank You,

Hadar Raz

2200 E Covenanter Dr.

### References

- Cohen, N., & Reynolds, K. (2014). Urban agriculture policy making in New York City: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36(5), 821–838. <https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12111>
- LaDeau, S. L., et al. (2013). "Higher mosquito production in low-income neighborhoods of Baltimore and Washington, DC: Understanding ecological drivers and mosquito-borne disease risk in temperate cities." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10(4), 1505–1526.
- Niere, L. H., et al. (2014). "Pesticide exposure among urban residents: A review." *Journal of Environmental Health*, 76(6), 24–32.
- Philpott, S. M., et al. (2020). "Local and landscape drivers of arthropod abundance, richness, and trophic composition in urban farms and gardens." *Environmental Entomology*, 49(6), 1327–1341.
- Schmelzkopf, K. (2002). "Incommensurability, land use, and the right to farm in the city: Considerations of social justice in urban agriculture." *Geographical Review*, 92(2), 197–212.
- Spliethoff, H. M., et al. (2016). "Health risks from lead-based contaminated soil in urban gardens." *Environmental Pollution*, 208, 91-99.
- Sponsler, D. B., et al. (2017). A review of urban beekeeping: Ecological, social, and management considerations. *Insects*, 8(3), 88. <https://doi.org/10.3390/insects8030088>
- Taylor, J. R., & Lovell, S. T. (2014). Urban home gardens in the Global North: A mixed methods study of opportunities and barriers. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31(2), 285–297. <https://doi.org/10.1007/>

[s10460-013-9475-0](#)

Wortman, S. E., & Lovell, S. T. (2013). Environmental challenges of urban agriculture: Opportunities for research and policy. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 47(18), 10201–10209. <https://doi.org/10.1021/es400970d>

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <[hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov)>

Mon, Aug 4, 2025 at 8:05 AM

To: Hadar Karmazyn <[hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com](mailto:hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com)>

Cc: [david.brantez@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:david.brantez@bloomington.in.gov), [joy.brown@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:joy.brown@bloomington.in.gov), [jennifer.burrell@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:jennifer.burrell@bloomington.in.gov), [hank.duncan@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:hank.duncan@bloomington.in.gov), [leanna.faubion@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:leanna.faubion@bloomington.in.gov), [katie.gandhi@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:katie.gandhi@bloomington.in.gov), [greulice@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:greulice@bloomington.in.gov), [david.hittle@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:david.hittle@bloomington.in.gov), [gabriel.holbrow@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:gabriel.holbrow@bloomington.in.gov), [rachael.johnson@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:rachael.johnson@bloomington.in.gov), [martipa@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:martipa@bloomington.in.gov), [joe.patterson@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:joe.patterson@bloomington.in.gov), [karina.pazos@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:karina.pazos@bloomington.in.gov), [roblingr@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:roblingr@bloomington.in.gov), Jacqueline Scanlan <[scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov)>, Dave Rollo <[rolld@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:rolld@bloomington.in.gov)>, [arnoldm@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:arnoldm@bloomington.in.gov), [rob.council@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:rob.council@bloomington.in.gov), [rebecca.davis@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:rebecca.davis@bloomington.in.gov), [finleyc@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:finleyc@bloomington.in.gov), [chastina.hayes@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:chastina.hayes@bloomington.in.gov), [anna.killionhanson@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:anna.killionhanson@bloomington.in.gov), [lifordk@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:lifordk@bloomington.in.gov), [stongj@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:stongj@bloomington.in.gov), [planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov), [desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov), [gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov), [april.rosenberger@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:april.rosenberger@bloomington.in.gov), [margaret.vanschaik@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:margaret.vanschaik@bloomington.in.gov), [atenro@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:atenro@bloomington.in.gov), [cartere@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:cartere@bloomington.in.gov), [mayor@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:mayor@bloomington.in.gov)

Good Morning Hadar,

We have received your email and will have it included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!



[Quoted text hidden]



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Opposition to Proposed UDO Amendment ZO-18-25, "Urban Agriculture, Commercial"

---

**Conkle, Daniel O.** <conkle@iu.edu>

Mon, Aug 4, 2025 at 11:37 AM

To: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, "greulice@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Cc: "mayor@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;mayor@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, "rollod@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;rollod@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Dear Plan Commission Members and Staff:

As noted in our earlier submission (dated July 7, 2025), we have lived for more than forty years at 2109 East Covenanter Drive. We do not wish to clutter the record, but we do wish to reiterate our continued opposition to this proposal and our general agreement with many of the comments submitted by other neighbors.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Daniel and Deborah Conkle



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Re: [Planning] I Support (ZO-18-25)**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 1:12 PM

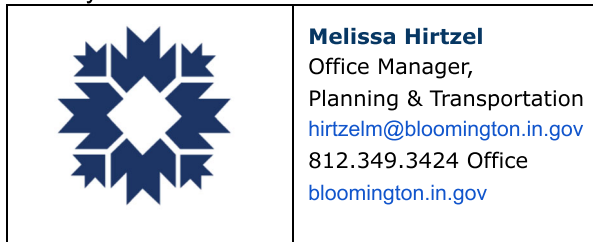
To: rmillunchick@gmail.com

Cc: planning@bloomington.in.gov, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Thank you Mr. Millunchick,

We have received your email and will get this included into the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!

On Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 1:09 PM Richard Millunchick <[rmillunchick@gmail.com](mailto:rmillunchick@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear City of Bloomington's Plan Commission and Bloomington's City Council,

Urban Ag educational opportunities in neighborhoods creates a community who works together to combat the volatile climate we currently live in. Pilot programs like GardenQuests Neighborhood Bokashi Food Waste Pilot & Neighborhood Terracycle Pilot are examples where community is built through education & involvement in a neighborhood.

In advance of the Plan Commission meeting on Monday, August 11th, please add this email to the public comments in support of the City of Bloomington's Visionary, Climate-Action Driven Food Sovereignty & Food Security Proposal (ZO-18-25)

Thank you.

- Richard Millunchick

-----  
Richard Millunchick  
[1018 E 1st St,](#)  
[Bloomington, IN 47401](#)



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Re: [Planning] Support for ZO-18-25**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Fri, Aug 1, 2025 at 10:51 AM

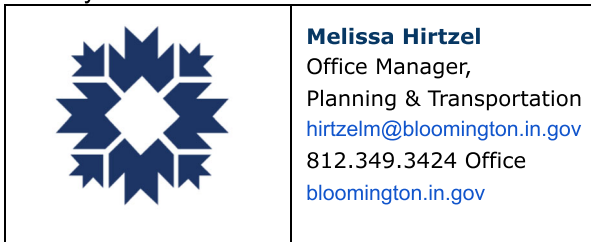
To: edwkitchen@gmail.com

Cc: planning@bloomington.in.gov, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Good Morning Ed,

We have received your email and will have it included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!

On Fri, Aug 1, 2025 at 10:45 AM ed Kitchen <[edwkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:edwkitchen@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hello, my name is Ed Kitchen and I am emailing in support of ZO-18-25, particularly as respects increasing our local food supply and nutrition security citywide.

In order to provide for this, I believe more educational and community-oriented residential farms are needed in the city. ZO-18-25 makes the necessary revisions to existing zoning ordinances to remove barriers to urban agriculture.

I urge you to vote yes on the proposal.

Thank you,  
Ed



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Re: [Planning] ZO-18-25**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:51 AM

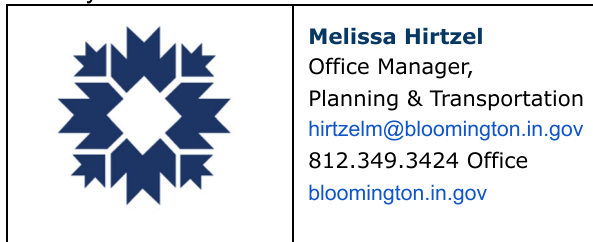
To: ungerdebra@gmail.com

Cc: planning@bloomington.in.gov, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Good Morning Ms. Unger,

We have received your email and will have this included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!

On Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 11:47 AM Debra S. Unger <[ungerdebra@gmail.com](mailto:ungerdebra@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Planning Commission,

Please support policies in Bloomington that will ensure the continued environmental, health and educational opportunities vital to a sustainable community.

Neighborhood resiliency matters to me especially in light of the volatile climate that continues to produce intense storms that challenge our infrastructure. The increase in electric outages that we have experienced over the past few years continually brings the idea of resiliency to the forefront.

There are food deserts in every city in America. Urban Farms that grow & sell food, teach urban agriculture, & support community gardeners are a necessity to increase access to healthy food and the knowledge & confidence for community members to grow their own food.

Dealing with issues like food waste in our community has been challenging. Organizations like GardenQuest that have piloted solutions to eliminate food waste from our landfill are imperative to address the challenges of the world we live in today.

Many households have attempted to compost, grow food, increase their sustainability and take on other environmentally-friendly endeavors. Without support, many residents attempt such things, but end up quitting, which amounts to failure. When support is available & close by (in a neighborhood), confidence increases because knowledge & learning opportunities are available. Success in endeavors like these is much more likely because of the support of organizations in neighborhoods like GardenQuest.

Urban Ag educational opportunities in neighborhoods creates a community who works together to combat the volatile climate we currently live in. Pilot programs like GardenQuests Neighborhood Bokashi Food Waste Pilot & Neighborhood Terracycle Pilot are examples where community is built through education & involvement in a neighborhood.

As Artificial Intelligence continues to expand more jobs will be lost. Urban Ag has the potential to increase employment within city limits, provide a living wage, while producing some of the most nutrient dense food available.

Many urban farms also provide jobs for local residents, hiring youth after school or during breaks and providing them with small stipends. This is a reliable way for students to build real-world skills and start earning their own income – which they, in turn, spend in the neighborhood.

Having a farm in a neighborhood creates a stronger sense of community and connection between growers and eaters by making it possible for residents to see where their food is grown (and by creating opportunities to volunteer or even work at the farm, too).

Access to fresh, healthy food is a significant issue for many of us living in low-income neighborhoods. This is especially true in urban areas where residents must travel more than a mile to access a full-service grocery store. Too often, that lack of access means having to buy food from convenience stores or fast-food restaurants, which rarely have fresh fruits and vegetables on sale.

More and more cities across the United States recognize the role city farms can play in improving community health, boosting the local economy, and revitalizing the environment. What's more, with many more people choosing to live in cities, urban farms will become critical resources in ensuring our metropolises are resilient and self-sufficient, especially as climate change impacts how and where we grow our food.

**Nutrition:** Urban agriculture offers increased access to healthy, locally grown, and culturally appropriate food sources. Having space to grow and share food is especially important in disinvested and underserved neighborhoods, where finding affordable fruits and vegetables can be challenging. Plus, growing and eating food locally reduces the distance food travels to our plates – which is good for our climate and our health, as food loses nutritional value in transport.

**Health:** While eating fresh food is beneficial in and of itself, the act of growing that food also boosts physical and mental health. Research shows that working with plants—and putting our hands in the dirt—provides outdoor physical activity, induces relaxation, and reduces stress, anxiety, blood pressure, and muscle tension. Providing this opportunity in neighborhoods allows more residents to take part in this healthy endeavor.

**Economy:** Urban agriculture can provide a flexible source of income for gardeners and cut family food costs. Also, urban gardening and farming projects, like GardenQuest, can often provide job training and jumpstart food entrepreneurship.

**Community:** Urban farming adds and preserves green space in cities, providing places for neighbors to come together, strengthen bonds, and build community cohesion. Urban agriculture connects people with the earth and the source of their food as well as with

each other. What's more, urban farms offer critical opportunities for youth leadership,<sup>36</sup> intergenerational collaboration, and cross-cultural learning.

**Environment:** Urban agriculture improves environmental health and climate resilience in the face of increasing storms and heat. Cultivated land absorbs rainfall, preventing stormwater from overloading sewer systems and polluting waterways. Also, by increasing vegetation and tree cover, farms and gardens attract pollinators like bees and keep city neighborhoods cooler, minimizing the health impacts of heat island effect.

Sincerely,  
Debra S. Unger, LCSW, ACSW  
Sent from my iPhone





Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Re: [Planning] ZO-18-25**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Thu, Jul 31, 2025 at 4:47 PM

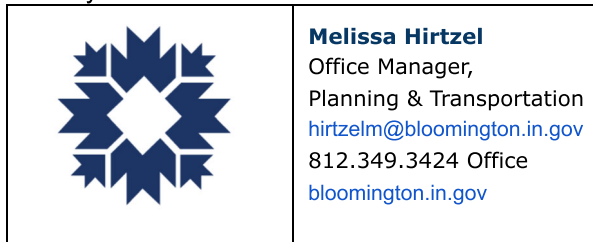
To: anitasum@yahoo.com

Cc: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Good Evening Anita,

We have received your email and will have it included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!

On Thu, Jul 31, 2025 at 4:41 PM 'anita sumner' via Planning Department <[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)> wrote:

My name is Anita Sumner. I live at 2616 E Roundhill Lane, which is in Bloomington, IN. I am writing to you today to show my support for the proposed ordinance ZO-18-25. Why? I believe that the rules governing the city should allow for property owners to not only grow and sell food, but teach and share with others, about how they grow food on their property and take on the challenges of deer, rabbits, and raccoons, as well as chemicals from the street, invasive species and more. Please vote yes so that I can learn and my kid(s) can learn how to grow our own food at home and live more sustainably from local experts who are accessible and live by example!

Sincerely,

Anita Sumner



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

## Re: [Planning] Support the City of Bloomington's Visionary, Climate-Action Driven Food Sovereignty & Food Security Proposal

1 message

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 3:35 PM

To: regester@iu.edu

Cc: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Thank you Ms. Regester,

We have received your email and will have it included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!



On Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 3:31 PM Regester, Amanda Christine <regester@iu.edu> wrote:

Dear Members of the City Council and the Plan Commission,

I am writing to express my strong support for urban farming initiatives and community-based agricultural education programs in our city. Neighborhood resiliency is a matter of great importance, particularly in light of the increasingly volatile climate. In recent years, we have experienced more intense storms and widespread electric outages that have underscored the need to strengthen our infrastructure and local self-sufficiency.

Urban farming addresses multiple challenges our neighborhoods face. Food deserts are a reality in cities across America, including our own. Farms that grow and sell food, teach urban agriculture, and support community gardeners are essential to increasing access to healthy food while equipping residents with the knowledge and confidence to grow their own.

It is important to note that this is not only about food but also about flowers. Increased diversity in locally grown flowers plays a critical role in sustaining pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects that are essential to the health of our food systems. By supporting local flower production, we support the pollination cycles that increase food diversity, crop yields, and overall ecosystem stability. Urban flower cultivation also contributes to biodiversity, reduces the urban heat island effect, and creates habitat for pollinators that, in turn, sustain both urban and rural agriculture.

Organizations like GardenQuest demonstrate the potential impact of such efforts. Their initiatives to divert food waste from landfills and their neighborhood composting pilots show how community-based solutions can address environmental and food security challenges simultaneously. Programs like their Bokashi Food Waste Pilot and Neighborhood Terracycle Pilot illustrate how education and hands-on involvement can strengthen communities while promoting sustainable practices.

Access to support and education is crucial. Many households attempt composting, gardening, or other sustainable practices on their own but struggle to succeed without guidance. They often dabble for a year or two, and then give up and space becomes unsightly and overgrown, harboring many unwanted neighborhood pests. When local organizations are available within the neighborhood, confidence rises, and residents are far more likely to achieve lasting success. Urban agriculture projects embedded within neighborhoods provide that critical support network.

The benefits of urban farming extend beyond food access. These initiatives can create jobs, including opportunities for youth through after-school and summer programs that teach real-world skills while circulating income back into the neighborhood. Urban agriculture and flower farming also contribute to climate resilience, reducing the heat island effect, managing stormwater, and creating green spaces that bring neighbors together and promote community cohesion.

This work is imperative to the future of our children. If we wait another generation to take meaningful action, it will be too late—the damage to our environment, food systems, and community health will be irreversible. By investing now in neighborhood-based urban farming and education, we can create a sustainable foundation for the next generation and ensure they inherit a city capable of nourishing both people and the planet.

With more people choosing to live in cities, urban farms and local flower-growing initiatives are becoming critical resources to ensure that our communities are resilient and self-sufficient. Together, they improve nutrition and food diversity, enhance environmental health through pollinator support, and strengthen both the ecological and social fabric of our neighborhoods.

I urge the City Council to prioritize policies and funding that support urban farms, local flower production, and neighborhood-based education programs like those offered by GardenQuest. Investing in these initiatives is an investment in the long-term resiliency, health, and sustainability of our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent and important matter.

Sincerely,

Amanda Regester

**Amanda Regester, MSN, CPNP-PC**

*Health Services Administration Leader*

Nutrition and Exercise Science Research Center (NERC)

IU School of Public Health - Bloomington

1025 E. 7th St.

Bloomington, IN 47405

 [regester@iu.edu](mailto:regester@iu.edu) |  317-450-8498

 [IU-NERC Website](#)



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH-BLOOMINGTON

**NUTRITION AND EXERCISE  
RESEARCH CENTER**



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Re: [Planning] Support the City of Bloomington's Visionary, Climate-Action Driven Food Sovereignty & Food Security Proposal**

---

**Melissa Hirtzel** <hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov>

Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 3:35 PM

To: regester@iu.edu

Cc: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Thank you Ms. Regester,

We have received your email and will have it included in the Plan Commission packet.

Thank you!



On Wed, Jul 30, 2025 at 3:31 PM Regester, Amanda Christine <regester@iu.edu> wrote:

Dear Members of the City Council and the Plan Commission,

I am writing to express my strong support for urban farming initiatives and community-based agricultural education programs in our city. Neighborhood resiliency is a matter of great importance, particularly in light of the increasingly volatile climate. In recent years, we have experienced more intense storms and widespread electric outages that have underscored the need to strengthen our infrastructure and local self-sufficiency.

Urban farming addresses multiple challenges our neighborhoods face. Food deserts are a reality in cities across America, including our own. Farms that grow and sell food, teach urban agriculture, and support community gardeners are essential to increasing access to healthy food while equipping residents with the knowledge and confidence to grow their own.

It is important to note that this is not only about food but also about flowers. Increased diversity in locally grown flowers plays a critical role in sustaining pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects that are essential to the health of our food systems. By supporting local flower production, we support the pollination cycles that increase food diversity, crop yields, and overall ecosystem stability. Urban flower cultivation also contributes to biodiversity, reduces the urban heat island effect, and creates habitat for pollinators that, in turn, sustain both urban and rural agriculture.

Organizations like GardenQuest demonstrate the potential impact of such efforts. Their initiatives to divert food waste from landfills and their neighborhood composting pilots show how community-based solutions can address environmental and food security challenges simultaneously. Programs like their Bokashi Food Waste Pilot and Neighborhood Terracycle Pilot illustrate how education and hands-on involvement can strengthen communities while promoting sustainable practices.

Access to support and education is crucial. Many households attempt composting, gardening, or other sustainable practices on their own but struggle to succeed without guidance. They often dabble for a year

or two, and then give up and space becomes unsightly and overgrown, harboring many unwanted neighborhood pests. When local organizations are available within the neighborhood, confidence rises, and residents are far more likely to achieve lasting success. Urban agriculture projects embedded within neighborhoods provide that critical support network.

The benefits of urban farming extend beyond food access. These initiatives can create jobs, including opportunities for youth through after-school and summer programs that teach real-world skills while circulating income back into the neighborhood. Urban agriculture and flower farming also contribute to climate resilience, reducing the heat island effect, managing stormwater, and creating green spaces that bring neighbors together and promote community cohesion.

This work is imperative to the future of our children. If we wait another generation to take meaningful action, it will be too late—the damage to our environment, food systems, and community health will be irreversible. By investing now in neighborhood-based urban farming and education, we can create a sustainable foundation for the next generation and ensure they inherit a city capable of nourishing both people and the planet.

With more people choosing to live in cities, urban farms and local flower-growing initiatives are becoming critical resources to ensure that our communities are resilient and self-sufficient. Together, they improve nutrition and food diversity, enhance environmental health through pollinator support, and strengthen both the ecological and social fabric of our neighborhoods.

I urge the City Council to prioritize policies and funding that support urban farms, local flower production, and neighborhood-based education programs like those offered by GardenQuest. Investing in these initiatives is an investment in the long-term resiliency, health, and sustainability of our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent and important matter.

Sincerely,

Amanda Regester

**Amanda Regester, MSN, CPNP-PC**

*Health Services Administration Leader*

Nutrition and Exercise Science Research Center (NERC)

IU School of Public Health - Bloomington

1025 E. 7th St.

Bloomington, IN 47405

 [regester@iu.edu](mailto:regester@iu.edu) |  317-450-8498

 [IU-NERC Website](#)



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH-BLOOMINGTON  
**NUTRITION AND EXERCISE  
RESEARCH CENTER**



Eric Greulich &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**support for urban agriculture ordinance language (Spier property)**

1 message

---

**Traci Jovanovic** <traci.s.jovanovic@gmail.com>

Tue, Aug 5, 2025 at 4:53 PM

To: "greulice@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Cc: Vladan Jovanovic &lt;vladan.m.jovanovic@gmail.com&gt;, Traci Jovanovic &lt;traci.s.jovanovic@gmail.com&gt;

Dear Mr. Greulich,

My name is Traci Shindell Jovanovic and I'm writing on behalf of my husband (Dr. Vladan Jovanovic) and myself in support of the UDO change being proposed regarding Urban Agriculture which is proposed for the Spier's property. We reside at 1209 S. Pickwick, approximately 1 block from the property. Our address isn't particularly relevant as this issue is for the **whole community**, I share it only because there has been quite a bit of neighborhood discussion and it is important that the council know that there is support both for and against in the neighborhood.

We have read the ordinance as well as the opposing and supporting letters. We've also read the book "Abundance" by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson. I reference this book as I believe it offers some key insights related to this topic. Specifically, there are rules and regulations designed to solve the problems of the 1970's/80's and in fact often prevent urban-density and green energy projects that would help solve the problems of the 2020's. Progress requires facing up to the institutions in life that are not working as they used to or that may be allowing for weaponization of the rules and regulations to prevent positive progress. "One generation's solutions can become the next generation's problems."

Bloomington touts its goal of sustainability and energy efficiency and to walk the talk, there is a need to adapt the zoning language accordingly. In reading the proposed changes, it appears that much thought has gone into how we as a community can "ease" into urban agriculture practices and education while still providing council approval/oversight to ensure that the integrity of neighborhoods and our city continue to thrive. The ordinance doesn't allow for all that was requested, and it doesn't deny everything. It's a step in the right direction as we navigate how we can support not only the Spier's efforts (with oversight) but the efforts of the other neighborhoods that have small-scale farming efforts which we see when walking through town (but haven't generated targeted complaints).

Thank you for taking this topic seriously, providing a well-thought-out plan and we hope that the commission will approve it to move forward.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vladan and Traci Jovanovic

**urban ag support.docx**

15K

**Sarah Jane Hughes**  
**1305 S. Brooks Drive, Bloomington**  
**hughes.sarahjane@gmail.com**

August 4, 2025

Members of the Bloomington Planning Commission  
Margie Rice, Corporation Counsel, City of Bloomington  
Eric Greulich, Senior Planning Director,  
Department of Planning and Transportation, City of Bloomington  
Town Hall, Bloomington

Via email to: [planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)

Re: Opposition to Proposed ZO-18-25 as “Spot Zoning” and Other Reasons

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I remain **steadfastly opposed** to ZO-18-25 (Urban Agriculture/Commercial) for the reasons set forth in my letter filed timely before the prior hearing on the major changes that took place on July 11, 2025. Please recall how fervently I stated my concerns in that letter. I also refer back to comments I filed in 2024 opposing much less expansive plans.

My reasons have become firmer since hearing the outpouring of opposition from abutters and nearby neighbors and questions from members of the Planning Commission. This is in part because of the disconnect between what the Spier family has described as its “educational goals” for several years and the proposed allowance of commercial urban agriculture in the City’s R-1 and R-2 zones.

Before I give more thorough explanations of my reasons for opposing ZO-18-25, let me summarize them:

- 1) The specific and heartfelt opposition from abutters and neighbors is far greater than the paltry and often non-specific support from others in this proceeding;



- 2) The claim by City employees that there has been “increasing interest” in urban farming is not supported by evidence the City’s agents have made public. The City’s own senior zoning official mentioned “one or possibly two” inquiries in a June 2025 conversation with abutters;
- 3) The scope of ZO-18-25 far exceeds the outdoor educational activities permissions that abutters and neighbors have heard the Spier family describe in public and private meetings as their goal for their property and that was the thrust of their 2024 application for a special permit;
- 4) ZO-18-25 is the functional equivalent of “spot zoning,” which Indiana law prohibits;
- 5) Other resources in the City such as Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard, the Bloomington Community Orchard, and citywide community gardens provide opportunities for children and others to experience urban gardening, growing food, and nutrition education and to do so in locations that have adequate off-street parking and are less dangerous to pedestrians, cyclists, and other traffic on heavily traveled streets such as E. Covenant Drive between High Street and College Mall Road; and
- 6) No sound public policy shows that permitting “commercial urban agriculture” will provide benefits to neighborhoods currently zoned R-1 and R-2 and, in fact, permitting commercial urban agriculture in settled R-1 and R-2 zones is likely to cause a decline in property values for all owners – with the benefits being obtained by one proponent and one outside group opposed to all zoning. This is not a good use of public resources or the City’s neighborhoods.

Now turning to explain my specific concerns in more detail:

1. The *outpouring of opposition from neighbors and abutters* stands in marked contrast to the *paltry support* for ZO-18-25 at that July 2024 hearing.
  - Two of those who favored the proposal were family members of the Spier family: Ms. Spier’s mother, Mrs. Austin, and Matt Austin, Ms. Spier’s brother.
  - Another was a member of the board of GardenQuest, which is the non-profit currently operating on the Spier’s family property at 2110 E. Covenant. Among the others who favored the sweeping and outsized changes that ZO-18-25 would allow was a grad student who may have a connection to Garden Quest, but who did not state it. I recall that only two other individuals who do not live in this neighborhood spoke in favor on July 11<sup>th</sup>.

ZO-18-25 is just what neighbor and abutter Dan Conkle described as “**spot zoning’ dressed up as a City-wide UDO amendment**”.



So far as neighbors have heard from Mr. Eric Greulich only one inquiry about urban farming – or possibly the Spiers plus one more person – came to the attention of the Department of Transportation and Planning. One does not make “significantly increased interest in urban agriculture” as the May 30<sup>th</sup> letter informing us of the impending UDO changes. Two inquiries would not do so, either. *One or two “inquiries” cannot or should not outweigh the opposition from abutters and close-by neighbors that proposed ZO-18-25 has generated.*

The opposition from neighbors and abutters is unanimous opposition. It matters not how many letters from school-age children or persons not living in the R-1 and R-2 zones may provide that the Spier family has been soliciting, as recently as last week. The authors of those letters will not be affected as we will.

There is no outpouring of support for commercial urban agriculture no matter how much the Spier and Austin families try to make it appear otherwise. Letters from persons living outside Bloomington they have encouraged over time and letters from school children are not the same as support from those residents who are abutters, near neighbors, and users of the stretch of E. Covenanter between High Street and College Mall Road.

2. I am not persuaded that the Spiers favor the breadth of changes that approval and enactment of ZO-18-25 would foist on many neighborhoods. During the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing, Ms. Bonnie Austin mentioned gardening repeatedly, but not commercial-scale agriculture. Ms. Elisha Austin Spier mentioned her passion for educating people on sustainable gardening. *She did not mention commercial-scale operations.*<sup>1</sup>

There is no publicly available evidence of support for giant hoop houses and greenhouses next to regular dwellings owned by families who paid premium prices to live on quiet streets in certain school districts.

So, how did the two-pronged group of changes to the UDO – permission to engage in commercial farming and retail sales of products grown or produced on other properties that ZO-18-25 would allow come into being? We have seen few clues. What do we know?

- We learned only through a public records access request the identity of the out-of-state group supported by the Koch brothers and dedicated to the end of zoning. The Corporation Counsel’s office tried to resist disclosing the group’s identity.

---

<sup>1</sup> I urge the Commissioners to read the June 2025 issue of The Harvest Report by Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard. It describes MHC’s own work with Girl Scouts and others to work its community garden. It also mentions that there is a Bloomington Community Orchard. So, GardenQuest is not the only source of gardening educational and volunteer opportunities available in the City.

- We also obtained – only through a separate public records access request -- a copy of the “legal agreement” between Elisha Austin Spier and the City to bring some changes to the UDO before your Commission in a certain time period. The Corporation Counsel’s office tried to claim that the agreement (that binds the City to some action) was “attorney work product.” I pointed out in two exchanges the impossibility of that position to the Corporation Counsel’s assistant attorney, particularly as the public notices of the proposed changes to the UDO mentioned the “legal agreement” and a timing requirement. As you know now, that agreement is between Elisha Spier and the City. Such agreements should not be secret and, legally, are not privileged.

3. The scope of ZO-18-25 is not supported by the Spiers’ statements of their goals since May 2024 or those of their supporters. The City-Spier agreement’s terms do not support the scope of the changes proposed in ZO-18-25. They only speak to adding educational activities to the uses the Spiers can make of their property. Ms. Spier also maintained this was her goal at the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing.

Thus, no one has explained to my satisfaction why ZO-18-25 is proposed as expansively as it reads. I think it is our right as neighbors sharing a dead-end street with the Spier’s property to know what the origins of “urban agriculture/commercial” are. We do not know.

The scope of ZO-18-25 does not appear to result from any wide community interest or the involvement of property owners it will affect directly. It serves one proponent and their out-of-state, “nonprofit” helpers.

This is an unnecessary disturbance of public trust in the City’s departments and leadership. This is particularly true because, when the Board of Zoning Appeals denied the Spiers’ 2024 application for a special permit, the Board’s members made clear that the uses the Spiers required needed to be a legislatively permitted use.

The “legal agreement” claims that it is the result of negotiations over a threat by the Spiers to sue the City. There is no reason of which I am aware to believe that the Spiers would have prevailed if they had sued the City and Board to overturn the Board’s late 2024 decision. Indeed, I am persuaded that they would not have prevailed because the Board of Zoning Appeals correctly interpreted existing provisions of the UDO in their 2024 ruling. Thus, it appears that the threat of litigation brought us to proposed ZO-18-25.

But Something else is going on to shape proposed ZO-18-25. And, frankly, it gives the unflattering image of **someone engaged in a power grab for those who hate zoning**. Not for those who like gardening and teaching gardening, sustainability, and nutrition. But for whose benefit? The out-of-state, zoning-hating nonprofit that assisted the Spiers? We cannot tell.

One family of abutters who commented both in writing and at the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing was specific about the value of zoning to them. They mentioned that they had moved to the street in the past five years and would not have invested in this neighborhood had they imagined that a commercial ag business would be permitted to operate next door. I agree. Of the other five homes on the southern end of S. Brooks Drive, not including the Spier family's, one resident has lived on the block for 70 years, my family for 37 years, one for 10 years, one for five years, and one home is owned by a non-resident who bought from a family that had lived on the block more than 60 years. We and others we see regularly valued the neighborhood and neighborhood schools in choosing to make it our homes.

Property owners especially in residentially zoned areas should be able to trust the City to protect us through its zoning ordinances. I still trust that the Planning Commission and Common Council will protect residential property owners from the deterioration of residential neighborhoods that ZO-18-25 will facilitate. (Is my trust reasonable? We will see.)

I will add that the urban farm on our street may remain "residential" for purposes of property taxes, but that its presence could drag down property values to the extent that the City will suffer a loss of tax base. As Jeffrey Stake testified at the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing, zoning protects property values. I agree.

I am not persuaded that the introduction of the "conditional use" portion of ZO-18-25 is sufficient protection for abutters and neighboring owners from the problems that other comments have laid out since the May 30 notice to neighbors. City employees have touted the "conditional use" requirement – a novelty in the UDO, I believe – as protection for abutters and nearby neighbors. I am not persuaded that it will be implemented as such.

Regardless, the mention of "conditional use" as an element of ZO-18-25 is a major change in the UDO and one that has had too little public exposure by the City given its significance overall. It almost hides in the chart of changes to the UDO without suitable explanation in the narrative on ZO-18-25 in my opinion. Only residents who have read the chart explaining the scope of the package of amendments to the UDO being proposed would even have noticed the "conditional use" provision.

Given the recent history of the Spiers' development and use of their property with multiple violations over at least four years, I am skeptical that they will observe the requirements and remove their encroachment onto the public access ways. As noted in my July 2025 comments, on many occasions in the past few years, Ms. Spier advertised for sale meats raised off her property at prices comparable to "Whole Foods." In other words, she was not limiting her retail sales to produce grown on the 2110 E. Covenanter property, as the current "Urban Agriculture/Non-Commercial UDO provision requires. She also has offered "recipe kits" using items presumably grown at that address but possibly items not grown there such as lemons.

When she first advertised produce and meats for sale several years ago, I inquired whether she had a license to do business from home. I learned that she did not. Does her permitting allow her or GardenQuest to sell items not grown on the property known as 2110 E. Covenanter? I have no idea.

I had considered drafting some amendments to ZO-18-25 prior to the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing. I tried, but I concluded that I had insufficient information to proceed with alternatives. Why didn't the Department of Transportation and Planning give us more details? Why can't the amendment be framed as an addition to the Urban Agriculture/Non-Commercial permission allowing outdoor educational activities. With the inclusion of requirements for off-street parking and appropriate safety regulations for visitors and, particularly, young students.

I am not persuaded that the Spier family will handle the operations on their property with full compliance with the terms of ZO-18-25 as currently proposed. We learned – from yet another public records access request – that the City has served the Spiers with two lengthy notices of violations. The first notice of violations the City sent was in 2021. The second notice the City sent was in 2024. Have any of the violations been cured? It does not appear so from outward appearances because the Spiers continue to occupy the stretch of the City's easement on the east side that is in the right of way on S. Brooks Drive.

I, sadly, am not persuaded yet that the City is committed to enforcing its own rules as they exist today or might if ZO-18-25 because it appears that it appears to be slow in taking action to enforce either the 2021 or 2024 notices of violations. I asked for the City's commitment to enforcement in my July 2025 comment on ZO-18-25. I continue to ask for the City's commitment to enforce current or future rules.

Please do not do harm to longstanding residential neighborhoods by allowing commercial uses and retail sales of items not grown on the same property. Do not do to us what one Planning Commissioner expressed concerns about permitting another storage facility on a greenway – her concerns about land use and aesthetics. What if the proposal was for a convenience store or an auto-repair shop? Once the residential

versus commercial distinction to zoning is broken, the push will be on for more. And the out-of-state group will lead that charge!

4. Spot zoning is prohibited in Indiana. There are sound public policy reasons why spot zoning is prohibited.

**ZO-18-25 is spot zoning.** It will enable one person's "dreams" (Ms. Elisha Spier's word) to take control of a neighborhood and a stretch of a heavily traveled street. It will allow more uses raising the attendant traffic safety concerns that caused your Commission to reject the Spiers' prior application for the bicycle-repair station only a few years ago.

ZO-18-25 will allow the Spier family to commence broader uses of commercial farming with scant reference to or requirements of control of run-offs, which will affect the entire downstream area of the creek running parallel to S. Brooks on their property, their abutters' properties, and our property. It will allow outdoor educational uses without adequate requirements for students' safety. Sorry, but this is not good enough work for this City.

5. Other resources within the City's limits offer residents opportunities to learn about gardening, sustainability, and nutrition.

These are not subjects in the exclusive knowledge base or province of Elisha Spier, no matter how fervently she wishes to engage in them. Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, the Bloomington Community Orchard, and local community garden plots are available to residents of all neighborhoods and zones. MHC, in fact, described its work with Girl Scouts and others in its June 2025 newsletter, a copy of the relevant first page I attach for the record.

These alternative locations for instruction – the alleged goal that the Speirs advanced in 2024 for their special permit application and stressed in their oral presentations at the July 11<sup>th</sup> hearing – do not suffer **the traffic safety and congestion deficits** as the Spiers' property at the corner of E. Covenanter and S. Brooks Drive has and will have to a greater extent if ZO-18-25 is enacted.

- The alternate locations parking off street.
- They do not bring 20 or more individuals to a curvy and so-heavily-traveled street that (a) the Planning Commission denied the Spiers' application to host a bicycle-repair station in the public right of way on the corner only a few years ago or (b) the Transportation and Planning Department considered appropriate for numerous speed bumps to curtail speeding on the stretch to College Mall Drive.
- They do not introduce commercial-size tall hoop houses and green houses to a residential zone.

- They do not impose on the right of way on the south stretch of S. Brooks with piles of stones and building materials or encroach upon the public right of way. They do not park so many vehicles on the same stretch of S. Brooks as to make it hard for the other property owners on the same block to use S. Brooks for their own access.

The idea that 2110 E. Covenanter is the best spot for GardenQuest or its educational desires is, unhappily, ridiculous. The idea that neighbors should have to live next to a newcomer commercial urban farm is equally ridiculous. The idea that commercial farming and retail sales should be permitted in the R-1 and R-2 zones likewise is ridiculous.

6. No sound public policy shows that permitting “commercial urban agriculture” will provide benefits to neighborhoods currently zoned R-1 and R-2 or that it will result in production of more sustainable food for the City.

The scant recitation that there is a “significantly increased interest” in urban farming, a statement I challenge given Mr. Greulich’s statements to abutters is the basis for ZO-18-25. This is an insufficient basis to make two major changes to the UDO for the R-1 and R-2 zones. The May 30<sup>th</sup> notice letter suggested that the reason for the mid-summer consideration of the new “urban agriculture/commercial” zone was to comply with a “legal agreement” that bound the City to make a proposal by a time certain. Thus, it is possible that the timing requirement contributed to the rushed consideration or drafting of ZO-18-25.

I support Jeff Stake’s conclusion (expressed in his statement at the July 14<sup>th</sup> hearing) that permitting commercial urban agriculture in settled R-1 and R-2 zones is likely to cause a decline in property values for all owners – with the benefits being obtained by one proponent and one outside group opposed to all zoning.

Economists call such advantages by one at the expense of others “creating externalities.” (I am not an economist, but I take their point.) I call this, as noted above, just old-fashioned “spot zoning.”

Land for commercial agriculture is available in this county, and possibly within the City’s limits. With land available, there is even less reason to inflict commercial urban farming onto residential neighborhoods.

**Concluding Thoughts:** I take no pleasure in opposing what neighbors of almost a decade seek to do. But I believe I have no option but to oppose our neighbors' proposed uses of their lands that will create traffic safety, parking problems, and most importantly pedestrian and bicycle riders' safety issues. For the reasons expressed, I cannot support Zo-18-25 as currently written. The public also has too little information to enable me to propose amendments that would mitigate the effects of ZO-18-25, as proposed.

Moreover, Mr. Greulich told one of our neighbors in the past 10 days that he intends to make a new draft of ZO-18-25 available on Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup>. That is the same day as public comments are due for the August 11<sup>th</sup> hearing.

This planned release of a fresh draft of ZO-18-25 puts the public to the effort to prepare comments on what may prove to be the "old draft" and not to have sufficient opportunity to comment on the "new draft" in the time provided by Mr. Greulich for public written comments.

**This is not responsible management of the public comment process.** If indeed the City's employees release a new draft of ZO-18-25 today, the public should have an adequate opportunity to review it and submit written comments and prepare for the announced hearing on August 11<sup>th</sup>. I submit that a new draft requires the same two hearings as were planned for ZO-18-25 with no allowance of a waiver for the second hearing as someone requested.

Otherwise, release of a new draft after the close of the public comment period is antithetical to what a public comment period is supposed to be. It is not good government. Certainly, it is not what I have seen from other Administrations in 37 years. It seems like the City's ostensible commitment to transparency and public participation is empty.

The Windemere Addition is a verdant area and plantings of peonies, rubeckia daisies, redbuds, dogwoods, and azaleas. The neighborhood has lots of tall trees and (probably) too much coverage in lawns instead of fields of clover and wildflowers. I support sustainability and have worked on protections for pollinators here and elsewhere.

Approving ZO-18-25 as distributed for the July 14<sup>th</sup> hearing is not sound policy. Enacting it will lead to a long-term deterioration of residential neighborhoods in the R-1 and R-2 zones. What a shame that will be! Instead of hearing neighbors practice musical instruments, we will have commercially sized generators and the like engaging in urban farming from dawn to dusk!

**Please do not approve ZO-18-25, which puts the R-1 and R-2 zones at risk for the benefit of one property owner and its friendly, out-of-state, anti-zoning helpers.**

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Sarah Jane Hughes

Sarah Jane Hughes

Attachment: Page 1 of the June 2025 "The Harvest Report" from Mother Hubbard's Cupboard





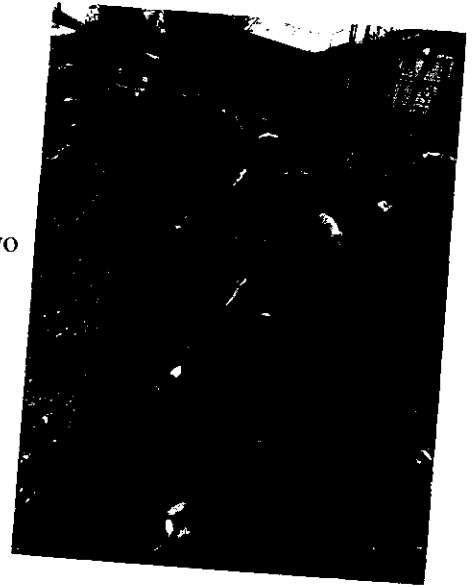
# The Harvest Report

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard Harvest Report • June 2025



Friends,

The youth have been busy in the garden this season! First, a local Girl Scout troop helped us plant spring crops. Then, recent visitors to Kids Garden, which kicked off on June 3, harvested and snacked on the first crops: peas, radishes, and greens galore. It's always a delight to see children enjoy their first garden snacks of the year or find a ripe strawberry in the garden tower. We were then fortunate to host a youth group that accomplished more in two hours than our team could have done in two weeks without them. Our full gardens have had a robust weeding for the season and are freshly mulched.



Inside, garden harvests have been turned into mint tea and cream puffs stuffed with sliced strawberries. We've shared recipes and turned pantry staples like canned fruit and applesauce into new recipes, like fruit cocktail upside-down cake. We hope these moments of connection and shared snacking make all the new faces we're seeing feel welcomed and excited to share their own ideas and recipes when they return to the pantry.

Alongside this programming is our community's awareness that they are on more uncertain ground. This feeling, along with rising barriers to accessing health care and government benefit programs, have led to a 30% increase in individuals served through our pantry so far this year.

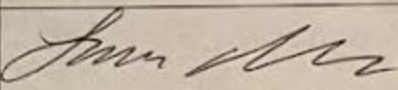
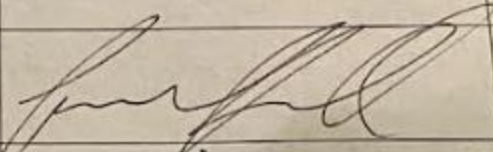
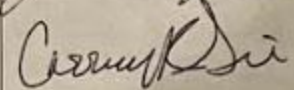
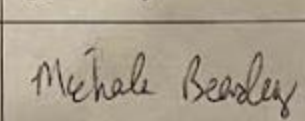
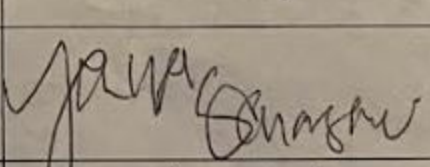
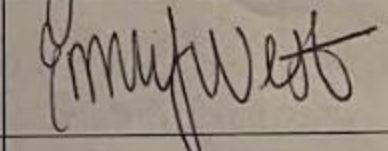
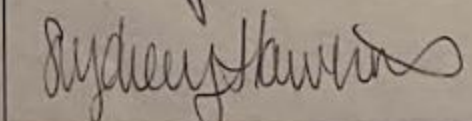
While much is uncertain, we know that some things remain very clear: Our community cares for each other, and when we ask for what we need, we learn how much help is available to us. So, we're boldly asking for your help. Could you consider increasing your investment in our work by 30%? This may look like joining our Harvest Team, the community of donors who make recurring contributions to provide stable, predictable income for our work while making their contribution a more sustainable fit for their monthly budget. It may look like contributing shelf-stable food in addition to your monetary gift or increasing in your annual gift. However you choose to show up for equitable access to food and community, we thank you.

We've filled these pages with opportunities to join the Hub in community. Find us at Taste of Bloomington. Bring our recipes home with our cookbook. Join us in the garden. Snag an ice cream maker from Tool Share, and make summertime dreams come true. There's so much joy and connection to be had this season, and we wish that for you and for our full Hub community.

With gratitude,

  
Megan Betz  
CEO and President

1. I support Ellee and Bret Spier's request to receive a certificate of zoning compliance (CZC) to allow GardenQuest, an education non-profit, to provide small-scale urban agriculture education **indoors**, in a residentially-zoned neighborhood.
2. Furthermore, I support an amendment to Bloomington's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to allow for small-scale urban agriculture education & experiences **outdoors** in a residentially-zoned neighborhood.

Name	Address	Signature	Initials 1. Yes Indoors Urban Ag Ed	Initials 2. Yes Outdoors Urban Ag Ed & Experiences
Lance da Silva	3512 S. Bainbridge Dr. Bloomington, IN 47401		Lcd	Lcd
AMELIA HASCHL	1494 N KINSEY PIKE UNIT D3 BLOOMINGTON, IN 47404		AH	AH
Carrington Sills	3915 E. Brighton Crest Rd Bloomington, IN 47401		CS	CS
Michale Beasley	4826 N Love Lane Bloomington, IN 47404		MB	MB
Jaycee Schaschke	2387 E Winding Brook Circle 47401 Bloomington, IN		JS	JS
Emily West	1717 12 St. Bedford IN, 47421		EW	EW
Sydney Hawkins	210 Hidden Falls Camp Rd.		SH	SH



Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>

---

## Elle Spier

---

**Janet Barrows** <barrowsjanet@icloud.com>

Mon, Jul 15, 2024 at 1:59 PM

To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

I do not have a problem with the education portion of Elle's programming at her home.

Janet Barrows

1205 S Pickwick Place

Bloomington, IN 47401

812.325.3031

barrowsjanet@icloud.com



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Neighborhood Response to Spiers' Requests; Meeting Postponement

---

**Jeannie Bower** <supermom4365@att.net>

Fri, Jul 19, 2024 at 12:44 AM

To: "Gass, Glenn" &lt;gass@iu.edu&gt;

Cc: mayor@bloomington.in.gov, planning@bloomington.in.gov, Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, City Council <council@bloomington.in.gov>, Dave Rollo <rollod@bloomington.in.gov>, morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov, justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov, desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov, gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov, sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov, ewyatt@mccsc.edu, ahennessy@mccsc.edu, apirani@mccsc.edu, cfr@mccsc.edu, ecooperman@mccsc.edu, rgrimes@mccsc.edu, bshurr@mccsc.edu, "Mooney, Sian" <simoon@iu.edu>, Debbi Conkle <debbiconkle@gmail.com>, "Conkle, Daniel O." <conkle@indiana.edu>, Sarah Wyatt Swanson <sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com>, Ben@secretlycanadian.com, "Hughes, Sarah Jane" <sjhughes@indiana.edu>, "Barnes, A James" <barnesaj@indiana.edu>, Jim Glen <jglenin@gmail.com>, Mather-Boehm Deborah <dmbarch02@gmail.com>, Hadar Karmazyn <hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com>, raz.boaz@gmail.com, Indermohanvirk <indermohanvirk@gmail.com>, "Alderson, Arthur S." <aralders@indiana.edu>, maria martinez <maria3139090@gmail.com>, "Gass, Glenn" <gass@indiana.edu>, jma6385@yahoo.com, "Cook, Constance L." <cglen@indiana.edu>

Agree totally  
Jean T. Bower

> On Jul 18, 2024, at 6:42 PM, Gass, Glenn <gass@iu.edu> wrote:

>

> We would like to add our voices in support of Connie and Jim Glen's suggestion (below) that the meeting regarding the Spier's "Educational urban farm" (GardenQ4U) be postponed until everyone has had a chance to review the documents and ponder the issues. Much has not been shared along the way and at this point it feels like an ambush. The very neighbors it will effect most have been purposefully kept out of the loop. This issue has already caused more than enough friction in the neighborhood, and with so many variables, who knows how awry things could go? This is a business, not a backyard garden.

[Quoted text hidden]



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Signatures in support of GardenQuest (Ellee Spier)

---

**Congregation Beth Shalom** <bethshalombloomington@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 1:47 PM

To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

Dear Jackie,

Congregation Beth Shalom circulated a Change.org petition to collect signatures to support GardenQuest's request to be able to educate in a residentially-zoned area. Please accept the attached signatures for consideration.

Many thanks,

Sarah

Sarah Portwood (*she/her*)  
Congregational Administrator  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
3750 E Third Street  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
(812) 334-2440  
[www.bethshalom-bjc.org](http://www.bethshalom-bjc.org)



---

**GardenQuest Signatures.pdf**

78K

## petition\_signatures\_jobs\_490100341\_20240716171013

<b>Joanne Shead</b>	Matteson	IL	60443	US	2024-07-11
<b>Aaron Hoffman</b>	Savannah	GA	31405	US	2024-07-11
<b>Sam Clemetsen</b>	Greenville	SC	29601	US	2024-07-11
<b>Sarah Portwood</b>	Bloomington	IN	47403	US	2024-07-11
<b>Bruce David</b>	Heltonville	IN	47436	US	2024-07-11
<b>Madeline Hirschland</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-11
<b>Jerry Myerson</b>	Bloomington	IN	47403	US	2024-07-11
<b>Andrew Floyd</b>				US	2024-07-11
<b>juelci klotz</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-11
<b>Larry Moss</b>	Albany	CA	94706	US	2024-07-12
<b>Katie Webber</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-12
<b>Precilla Aviles</b>	New Britain	CT	6051	US	2024-07-12
<b>Daphne Richards</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-12
<b>Angela Aneiros</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-12
<b>Sara Friedman</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-12
<b>danery cervantes</b>	San Jose	CA	95132	US	2024-07-12
<b>Layla Wood</b>	Apex	NC	27502	US	2024-07-12
<b>Natasha Coles</b>	Anchorage	AK	99501	US	2024-07-13
<b>Diane Legomsky</b>	Bloomington	IN	47401	US	2024-07-13
<b>gisselle garcia</b>	greenwood	IN	46143	US	2024-07-13
<b>Joseph Kreft</b>	Oceanside	CA	92057	US	2024-07-13
<b>Heather Isaac</b>	Vista		92084	US	2024-07-13
<b>Harmony Rucker</b>	Monticello	GA	31064	US	2024-07-13
<b>Bonnie Gordon-Lucas</b>	Glen Mills	PA	19342	US	2024-07-14
<b>LA Fitzgerald</b>	Winchester	TN	37398	US	2024-07-14
<b>Lynsey Bartholomew</b>	Justin	TX	76247	US	2024-07-14
<b>Alexys Martinez</b>	Dallas	TX	75270	US	2024-07-14
<b>James Collins</b>	New Orleans	LA	70114	US	2024-07-14
<b>Tyler Walker</b>	San Antonio	TX	78254	US	2024-07-14
<b>Vita Washington</b>	Fort Washington	MD	20744	US	2024-07-14
<b>Ralphie Beam</b>	Cumberland	MD	21502	US	2024-07-15
<b>Kelly Chapman</b>	Boca Raton	FL	33433	US	2024-07-15
<b>Nicole Collings</b>	Sebring	FL	33870	US	2024-07-15
<b>Alana Preziosi</b>	Swedesboro	NJ	8085	US	2024-07-15
<b>Lilly Hupke</b>	Mooresville	NC	28117	US	2024-07-16

To Note: The Change.org system inputs users zip code based on the original location where they set up their email address or their cell phone. The individuals on the list are members of Congregation Beth Shalom on East Third Street.



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**[Planning] Petition and Requests of Elisha Spier, 2110 E. Covenant Dr.**

---

**Conkle, Daniel O.** <conkle@iu.edu>

Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 1:23 PM

Reply-To: conkle@iu.edu

To: Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, City Council &lt;council@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Dave Rollo &lt;rollod@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Cc: "mayor@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;mayor@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, "gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Debbi Conkle &lt;debbiconkle@gmail.com&gt;, Constance Cook Glen &lt;constancecookglen@gmail.com&gt;, Sarah Wyatt Swanson &lt;sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com&gt;,

"Ben@secretlycanadian.com" &lt;Ben@secretlycanadian.com&gt;, "Hughes, Sarah Jane" &lt;sjhughes@indiana.edu&gt;, "Barnes, A James" &lt;barnesaj@indiana.edu&gt;, James Glen &lt;jglenin@gmail.com&gt;, Mather-Boehm Deborah &lt;dmbarch02@gmail.com&gt;, "raz.boaz@gmail.com" &lt;raz.boaz@gmail.com&gt;, Indermohanvirk &lt;indermohanvirk@gmail.com&gt;, "Alderson, Arthur S." &lt;aralders@indiana.edu&gt;, maria martinez &lt;maria3139090@gmail.com&gt;, Jeannie Bower &lt;supermom4365@att.net&gt;, "Gass, Glenn" &lt;gass@indiana.edu&gt;, Julie Gass &lt;jma6385@yahoo.com&gt;

Dear Jacqueline Scanlan, Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals, and Members of City Council:

Elisha Spier's current petition and requests place us, her neighbors, in a difficult position. Since 1983, we have lived at 2109 E. Covenant Drive, which is directly across the street. During our four decades in the Covenant neighborhood, we have treasured not only its historical and residential character but also its friendly and cooperative spirit, and we have attempted to extend this spirit to the Spiers. Sadly, the transformation of their property from a beautiful residential lot into a working farm, combined with their past requests to city officials, have had an adverse impact on our neighborhood – not only tangibly but also by impairing our friendly, transparent, and cooperative manner of interacting. We do appreciate Ellee's reaching out to us recently to discuss her current proposals. We have tried to be neighborly friends to the Spiers and will continue to do so. Even so, we share the concerns expressed in the memorandum of opposition that has been submitted by Connie Cook Glenn and other residents of South Brooks Drive, who in many respects are the ones most directly affected by the farm and by the possibility of its further expansion. We trust that city officials, including members of the Board of Zoning Appeals and City Council, will reach appropriate decisions.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Dan and Debbi Conkle

2109 E. Covenant Dr.





Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Attention: Neighborhood Response to Spiers' Requests

---

**Constance Cook Glen** <constancecookglen@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 12:09 PM

To: mayor@bloomington.in.gov, planning@bloomington.in.gov, Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, City Council &lt;council@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Cc: Dave Rollo &lt;rollod@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov, justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov, desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov, gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov, sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov, ewyatt@mccsc.edu, ahennessey@mccsc.edu, apirani@mccsc.edu, cfr@mccsc.edu, ecooperman@mccsc.edu, rgrimes@mccsc.edu, bshurr@mccsc.edu, simoon@iu.edu, jafarmer@iu.edu, Debbi Conkle &lt;debbiconkle@gmail.com&gt;, "Conkle, Daniel O." &lt;conkle@indiana.edu&gt;, Sarah Wyatt Swanson &lt;sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com&gt;, Ben@secretlycanadian.com, "Hughes, Sarah Jane" &lt;sjhughes@indiana.edu&gt;, "Barnes, A James" &lt;barnesaj@indiana.edu&gt;, James Glen &lt;jglenin@gmail.com&gt;, Mather-Boehm Deborah &lt;dmbarch02@gmail.com&gt;, Hadar Karmazyn &lt;hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com&gt;, raz.boaz@gmail.com, Indermohanvirk &lt;indermohanvirk@gmail.com&gt;, aralders@indiana.edu, maria.martinez &lt;maria3139090@gmail.com&gt;, Jeannie Bower &lt;supermom4365@att.net&gt;, Glenn Gass &lt;gass@indiana.edu&gt;, Julie Gass &lt;jma6385@yahoo.com&gt;

To: Mayor Kerry Thomson, Jacqueline Scanlan, Board of Zoning Appeals, and City Council Members:

Please see attached memo responding to the Spiers' requests to the city. This response is predicated on the notification we received on the 16th about the BZA zoning appeal set for the 25th, and on a publicly distributed petition by the Spiers. We have (an hour ago) received the official petition from Ms. Scanlan, and you will receive other notes about it later.

The neighborhood people on this email are either in agreement with this letter or are sending their own/calling, etc.

Thanks for your consideration of our concerns.

Best,

Connie Cook Glen and James Glen

**July 18.2024 - Response to Spiers petition.pdf**

123K

## MEMO

To: Kerry Thomson, Mayor, City of Bloomington, IN  
 Jacqueline Scanlan, Development Services Manager, City of Bloomington, IN  
 Board of Zoning Appeals Members, City of Bloomington, IN  
 City Council Members, City of Bloomington, IN

From: Constance Cook Glen, James Glen, Arthur Alderson, Indermohan Virk, Diamond Mather, Maria Martinez, Jeannie Bower, Trent Bower, Hadar Karmazyn, Boaz Raz, Sarah Wyatt Swanson, Ben Swanson  
 (Residents of Brooks Drive, Bloomington IN)

Date: July 18, 2024

Re: Petition Circulated by the Spier Family for a Special Permit and Change in Zoning

We are writing to express our opposition to the petition that we saw online, put forth by Ellee and Bret Spier, which seeks approval from the Bloomington, IN Board of Zoning Appeals and City Council to provide education at their non-profit, urban agriculture farm on the corner of E. Covenanter and S. Brooks. **As the people who would be most impacted by approval of this petition on a daily basis, we feel our voices should be heard. The petition itself is vague as to how plans would be implemented.**

We are aware that the Spiers have applied for and received non-profit status both from the Indiana Secretary of State and the Internal Revenue Service for the business that they operate on their residential property. They operate it under the name “Gardenquest, Inc.” which is linked with “GardenQ4U.”

Our understanding is that **after building a structure for business and educational purposes in an area zoned residential**, the Spiers have asked for a variance to the UDO so that they can continue to operate a nonprofit enterprise focused on urban agriculture, beekeeping, sustainable urban gardening, and neighborhood gardening education. We also understand that they are requesting that the terms of the UDO which regulate residential zoning be changed to allow similar educational urban farms to operate in Bloomington and to allow their own nonprofit to expand. **While the Spiers’ commitment to environmental sustainability, climate resiliency, and education may be commendable, we don’t believe that the operation of their non-profit belongs in a residential neighborhood**, despite their petition casting plans as climate change solutions. There are reasons why residential neighborhoods have been zoned for private lives and the objectives of private residences and public-facing enterprises are at odds with each other. The latter is necessarily outward-facing, as a formally established entity has to rely on promoting its activities. **For us, the insertion of a public enterprise in the midst of a residential neighborhood is the crux of the issue.** All the effects listed below are related to the intermixing of these incompatible interests. We also do not believe that the Spiers can be trusted to keep their enterprise small, as they have disregarded zoning laws in the past.

The petitioners have not made a good faith effort to address our concerns. All direct contact with the Spiers regarding the impact of their projects on neighbors’ lives thus far has been disregarded. **As such, we cannot count on their consideration of how things on their working farm impact us.**

We ask that you – the elected mentors and protectors of our community – consider several issues that are at stake. The Spiers’ petition calls for changes that impact their property and objectives, *as well as those of other residents in the neighborhood.*

- 1) Informing Neighbors

We, the closest neighbors, learned about this petition by accident several weeks after its initial distribution. If there was a **pre-submittal neighborhood meeting**, we did not hear of it and were not invited. We note that it is required in the most recently approved UDO and see this rationale on p. 291: “The purpose of the pre-submittal neighborhood meeting is to allow residents, businesses, and organizations in the area surrounding a proposed development project an early opportunity to learn about the project details and to provide feedback to the petitioners before significant funds have been spent on project design and engineering.” [20.06.040 3A, p. 291] Unfortunately, the Spier family has built little trust with us, as this is not the first time that we have become aware of their plans from third parties. Their projects have caused a lot of unease in the generally peaceful and harmonious Covenanter neighborhood. Some of us have experienced intimidation from members of the Spier family when we have had disagreements. **We do not believe that they followed the process of informing immediate neighbors of their plans and their petition.**

2) Zoning use boundaries

The UDO has set up specific **boundaries** for types of activities within our city for a purpose. These include boundaries that promote **stability**, as well as support, facilitate, and allow for the work of civic culture – schools, parks, homes, businesses, and so forth. Approval of the Spiers’ petition would comprise a departure from longstanding policies determining what constitutes a residential neighborhood. We see this statement in the UDO under purpose: [20.01.010 B4 (p.1)] “This UDO is adopted: to Protect the character and stability of residential, institutional, business, employment, and natural areas.” 20.01.01 B7 and B8 also speak to preserving, enhancing, and protecting “the scale and character of existing development from the encroachment of incompatible uses.”

Many of us are lifelong educators and dedicated to students, education, and sharing knowledge, and yet, we question the wisdom of either granting a variance or of changing the UDO to accommodate the requests by the Spiers for educational activities. This is **not** because we are opposed to educational activities, but rather, because we believe that opening the policy to educational activities within residential zoning will extend the **boundaries** of residential use in questionable ways. What will be the limits of these boundaries and how will they be enforced? If the request is approved, who oversees the numbers of students or their mode of transportation? Who will oversee the potential extension of other uses by property owners?

3) Disturbance of the peace

There is an aspect of the Spiers’ petition that represents a **disturbance of the peace** in the neighborhood; its goal is counter-productive to creating a positive community environment for the common good of the neighborhood. To reiterate: **We say this because we, the closest neighbors, learned about this petition by accident several weeks after its distribution at a local exercise facility, but not to us.** Their projects have not been part of **responsible development** of the property, but rather have caused disruptions on the street that are counter to the establishment of harmonious neighborhoods. As stated before, we have no confidence that there will be any consideration of our requests or concerns.

4) **Adverse Impact:** Increased Noise, Traffic, Visitor-Customer Parking, and Hours of Operation

East Covenanter is already a busy street. Adding traffic to East Covenanter has been a safety concern for some time and was addressed positively by the City with the addition of speed bumps. Recent uses of the Spiers’ property at 2110 E. Covenanter have added more **traffic** to East Covenanter and to the south end of S. Brooks Drive. S. Brooks is a narrow road and is the sole

means of access for five homes. Vehicles serving the Spiers' property parked along S. Brooks can make ingress and egress difficult. The Spiers have argued in their petition that they will have clients park in their driveway, but we have frequently seen clients parked along E. Covenanter and S. Brooks. If their petition is approved, who is going to ensure compliance on this issue?

We are also concerned about the constant activity level that accompanies an urban farm when combined with educational pursuits: vehicles, traffic, and signage are examples. The petitioners have proposed that they would limit hours of operation to the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., which we find to be excessive. Their activities now are a direct violation of a statement in the UDO, which says that activities could be exempted if "No employees or customers visit or park vehicles on the premises." [UDO 20.03.6Aii1 p. 111]

5) **Adverse Safety Impact:** The number and location of beehives

Over recent months, the Spiers have expanded their beekeeping from one to three hives, and we feel that this expansion is problematic. The hives are located at the southeast corner of their property *as far away from their home as possible*, but very close to S. Brooks and to neighbors' properties. There are other U.S. cities where beekeeping is not allowed on corner lots (for instance: Bloomington, MN), precisely because of the safety threat posed to walkers, pets, and neighbors, who cannot avoid the beehives when walking the street. In fact, when they are working with the hives, the Spiers have posted signage warning walkers to move to the other side of the street. We know Indiana law allows beekeeping, but the hives are near the street, and – since the street is a walkway – they **limit accessibility** for people who cannot easily cross to the other side.

If the Spiers' educational nonprofit is allowed to resume operations and children attend sessions on the property, the risks of their beekeeping will increase. We are concerned that beekeeping at the current level combined with the possibility of children being present on the property is risky – in fact, it is risky to us. What conditions need to be in place for the resumption of the nonprofit is a major topic for resolution in our view.

Additionally, without informing neighbors, the Spiers obtained permission to construct a "bee wall" **sign** and have built it on the southeast corner of their property even closer to the minimum setback provided in the City's laws and very close to S. Brooks. *The new bee wall stands as far as possible from their own home.*

Approved plans include creating a sign (mural) on the street-facing bee wall. It will face two neighbors' homes directly – but not the Spiers' home. The Spiers won't see this sign, but neighbors will. We are additionally disappointed that the Bloomington Area Arts Council committed public funds on the Spiers' private property that will impact the neighborhood aesthetic. **There is a place for public murals; it is not on a residential street.**

6) **Adverse Safety Impact:** Traffic and Children

The Spiers have noted that they wish to engage groups of children, and yet the property is unfenced and fronts a busy street. There is no other barrier to the street.

7) The Spiers' "urban farm" may negatively **affect property values**

We believe the Spiers' existing use of the urban farm and non-profit may decrease the value of neighbors' properties. This issue is addressed in the UDO under General Approval Guide: "The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the development standards variance

will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.” [20.06.080 Ei1b, p. 375] For example, a home on S. Brooks directly across from their property was empty more than a year after an extensive renovation. **Some of us on S. Brooks would not have bought homes in this neighborhood if we had known that a busy farm and non-profit educational facility would be built on the corner.**

8) Additional observations

Although materials we have seen about the GardenQuest/GardenQ4U enterprise mention “urban farming” prominently, we are aware that the term may mean different things to different people. One meaning is to use an unoccupied lot in a truly urban neighborhood that is a food (or supermarket) desert to grow fresh food for local residents. But generally, we’re having a hard time distinguishing an urban farm from a large family garden plot in a suburban area or a larger operation in a rural area.

What specifics do we know about the current enterprise? We know that the Spier family, (and helpers), grow produce, herbs, and flowers on their land at 2110 East Covenant. They offer all three categories for sale as well as recipe kits using the produce and herbs cultivated by Ellee Spier. We also know that the Spiers offer eggs for sale from the dozen or so chickens on their land. At some points, they have offered meats from other farms for pick-up from their property.

This is not an enterprise where all crops are grown to be donated to food banks, religious groups or other community entities. It is not an enterprise where community members share plots for their own consumption like the community garden near the YMCA. It is not a family garden plot feeding a family as is typical in many Bloomington homes.

## Concluding Thoughts

We respectfully ask you to consider whether the dissolution and extension of current UDO boundaries and policies regulating the purpose of residential property would be positive for Bloomington, given the likelihood that the results cannot be predicted or controlled. The adverse disturbances (noise, traffic, parking, number and placement of beehives etc.) of a neighborhood environment certainly seem counter-productive to community building. The promotion of an urban farm that seeks “clients” for their various projects necessarily requires an outward focus, the opposite of how a residential neighborhood is ideally conceptualized. If either a special permit (a zoning variance) is granted or a wider zoning amendment is approved, we urge that our concerns be addressed by the City. **This seems necessary, as these are issues that could magnify city-wide if more people in stable neighborhoods find themselves suddenly living next to an educational “farm” or business. These issues could provide potential for neighbors to be in conflict or could require that one side defer to the more aggressive party, neither one being conducive to neighborly coexistence based on longstanding laws governing zoned residential neighborhoods.**

In closing, we request that we be given a voice in discussions about the Spiers’ petition in the future. Thank you in advance for your support and, for keeping citizens informed in advance of any meetings or actions.

The Bloomington Environmental Commission strongly supports GardenQuest in their efforts to acquire a variance and conditional residential use permit, so they can pursue year-round indoor and outdoor urban soil-to-seed-to-table-to-compost education. Indoor instruction is critical at multiple stages of local food supply production education. Germination must often be done indoors, and cleaning and processing harvested produce requires bringing it indoors as well. Granting GardenQuest's request will help them provide beneficial education to support community resilience in a residential setting and will help support Bloomington's local food and agriculture goals as outlined in the Climate Action Plan.



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Environmental Commission Support of GardenQuest

---

**Carrie Albright** <carrie.a.albright@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 8:45 PM

To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

Cc: Rachael Sargent &lt;rachael.sargent@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hi Jackie,

Last month, the EC sent Ellee Spier (GardenQuest Director) a letter of support for her educational efforts through GardenQuest. She shared today that you are gathering the materials for BZA. I've attached the letter, please let me know if you need anything additional from me (cc'ing EC liaison, Rachael Sargent for her records as well).

Best,  
Carrie



---

**Letter of recommendation for GardenQuest (1).docx**

13K



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

## Neighborhood Response to Spiers' Requests; Meeting Postponement

Gass, Glenn &lt;gass@iu.edu&gt;

Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 6:41 PM

To: "mayor@bloomington.in.gov" <mayor@bloomington.in.gov>, "planning@bloomington.in.gov" <planning@bloomington.in.gov>, Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, City Council <council@bloomington.in.gov>, Dave Rollo <rollod@bloomington.in.gov>, "morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov" <morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov>, "justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov" <justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov>, "desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov" <desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov>, "gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov" <gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov>, "sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov" <sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov>, "ewyatt@mccsc.edu" <ewyatt@mccsc.edu>, "ahennessey@mccsc.edu" <ahennessey@mccsc.edu>, "apirani@mccsc.edu" <apirani@mccsc.edu>, "cfr@mccsc.edu" <cfr@mccsc.edu>, "ecooperman@mccsc.edu" <ecooperman@mccsc.edu>, "rgrimes@mccsc.edu" <rgrimes@mccsc.edu>, "bshurr@mccsc.edu" <bshurr@mccsc.edu>, "Mooney, Sian" <simoon@iu.edu>, Debbi Conkle <debbiconkle@gmail.com>, "Conkle, Daniel O." <conkle@indiana.edu>, Sarah Wyatt Swanson <sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com>, "Ben@secretlycanadian.com" <Ben@secretlycanadian.com>, "Hughes, Sarah Jane" <sjhughes@indiana.edu>, "Barnes, A James" <barnesaj@indiana.edu>, Jim Glen <jglenin@gmail.com>, Mather-Boehm Deborah <dmbarch02@gmail.com>, Hadar Karmazyn <hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com>, "raz.boaz@gmail.com" <raz.boaz@gmail.com>, Indermohanvirk <indermohanvirk@gmail.com>, "Alderson, Arthur S." <aralders@indiana.edu>, maria martinez <maria3139090@gmail.com>, Jeannie Bower <supermom4365@att.net>, "Gass, Glenn" <gass@indiana.edu>, "jma6385@yahoo.com" <jma6385@yahoo.com>, "Cook, Constance L." <cglen@indiana.edu>  
Cc: "Gass, Glenn" <gass@iu.edu>

We would like to add our voices in support of Connie and Jim Glen's suggestion (below) that the meeting regarding the Spier's "Educational urban farm" (GardenQ4U) be postponed until everyone has had a chance to review the documents and ponder the issues. Much has not been shared along the way and at this point it feels like an ambush. The very neighbors it will effect most have been purposefully kept out of the loop. This issue has already caused more than enough friction in the neighborhood, and with so many variables, who knows how awry things could go? This is a business, not a backyard garden.

I won't belabor points that have already been made, but this project simply does not seem to fit the character of the neighborhood. Would YOU like to live next to an urban farm, with noisy equipment running 8:00am - 8:00pm and kids on field trips running around next door?

Yes, kids play in backyards and once in a while (rarely) there are neighborhood get-togethers, but it is disingenuous to compare those random events to this type of ongoing agricultural work and "educational mission."

The petition also mentions "employees" and "interns" and points out that "It is within walking distance of four neighborhoods, three elementary schools and one high school."

Um... ok. Those are the type of numbers we can expect jamming up Covenanter? Apparently if all goes according to plan, it will be a real beehive of activity (pardon the pun). Is this something we want?

Lastly, we can't help but note this comment from the Spiers petition:

"I want to politely remind this body that I don't believe that we should have to ask."

Don't have to ask? Really? Do we have a 1st Amendment right to start a dairy farm in our backyard to teach kids how to milk cows and sell the milk for our "non-profit"? Maybe the time to ask would have been before the structures were built and all of this was in place. "If we build it, they will approve" seems to be the attitude. Please do not be taken in by the feelgood words about climate and sustainable growth, food insecurity, etc. Please come look for yourselves at the scale of this operation and put yourself in the neighbors' shoes.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

—  
Glenn & Julie Gass  
2211 Covenanter Drive  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
—



Dear all,

As a follow-up (since we saw the official petition from the Spiers at 11 this morning), I would like to request that the meeting be rescheduled to give us (the neighbors) more time to prepare. It seems clear that the Spiers have been working on this for a very long time and we have just been made aware of it.

I should have included this link in the earlier note, as it is the petition that we learned about by accident:

[https://www.change.org/p/support-neighborhood-based-garden-education?recruiter=1341231175&recruited\\_by\\_id=b76caf10-29d9-11ef-8140-c3953fd41d7c&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_campaign=petition\\_dashboard\\_share\\_modal&utm\\_medium=copylink](https://www.change.org/p/support-neighborhood-based-garden-education?recruiter=1341231175&recruited_by_id=b76caf10-29d9-11ef-8140-c3953fd41d7c&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=petition_dashboard_share_modal&utm_medium=copylink)

It is very vague, as we referenced in the memo and we thought it had been sent to the city.

I should also bring your attention to the fact that some included on this note are with MCCSC and some with IU. They are not neighbors but may be interested parties.

Best,  
Connie Cook Glen



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

## Re: One further comment re: Spier petitions

**constancecookglen@gmail.com** <constancecookglen@gmail.com>

Fri, Jul 19, 2024 at 4:24 PM

To: Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, planning@bloomington.in.gov

Cc: Debbi Conkle <debbiconkle@gmail.com>, Glenn Gass <gass@indiana.edu>, Indermohan Virk <indermohanvirk@gmail.com>, Sarah Jane Hughes <sjhughes@indiana.edu>, Hadar Karmazyn <hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com>, Mather-Boehm Deborah <dmbarch02@gmail.com>, Chizuko Johnson <chizukojohnson@gmail.com>, Sarah Wyatt Swanson <sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com>, James Glen <jglenin@gmail.com>, A James Barnes <barnesaj@indiana.edu>, Boaz Raz <raz.boaz@gmail.com>, Daniel Conkle <conkle@iu.edu>

I would like to request that the memo submitted on Thursday be updated to include the term conditional residential use. This note is to confirm opposition to the conditional residential use petition put forth by the Spiers. We note that their petition signers are not from Brooks drive and some are out of state. The public petition is unclear about the terms of the conditional use request. The petitioners statement also expands from requesting only indoor use to suggesting that the BZA find a way to approve outdoor use to allow for full year use which we oppose. It requests sales of products in this commercial venture which we also oppose. The statement about inspiring others runs counter to our experience with Spiers who have been dismissive at best about all of our concerns. They have consistently misrepresented their actions and refused to even consider any close neighbor's statements. We in fact were not given the opportunity to discuss their public petition as it was not given to us. We have been treated as if we were invisible. The final paragraphs are astounding but represent the attitude we experience from them.

Thank you for all of your efforts for the citizens of Bloomington.  
Written on behalf of Jim and Connie Glen with copies to close neighbors.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 18, 2024, at 10:08 AM, Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov> wrote:

Hi Debbi,

I have attached the updated petitioner's statement for you.

Thanks,  
Jackie

On Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 11:05 AM Debbi Conkle <debbiconkle@gmail.com> wrote:

Jackie,

Thanks for this information. I realize that we do not have the actual petition that Ellee filed with the City. I am copying Connie Glen, a neighbor on South Brooks next to the Spier property. Would you please send that to Connie and me?

Thank you,  
Debbi

On Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 10:15 AM Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov> wrote:

Hi Debbi,

Here is a link to the [UDO](#). Table 03-1 lists uses and whether they are permitted, conditional, temporary, or accessory. Page 87 (pdf page 95) lists "Home Occupation" as an accessory use in the R2 zoning district, which is the zoning for the property. From the bottom of page 110 through the top of page 113 show the use-specific standards for the use "Home Occupation". They are requesting the Conditional Use required by (C) on page 111 and variances from the (F) and (K) in the same list.

Thanks,

Jackie Scanlan, AICP  
Development Services Manager

On Wed, Jul 17, 2024 at 3:12 PM Debbi Conkle <[debbiconkle@gmail.com](mailto:debbiconkle@gmail.com)> wrote:

Ms. Scanlon,

Thanks so much for meeting with me and answering my questions just a few minutes ago.

Unfortunately, I forgot to ask what specific part or parts of the UDO are in question. I know that the UDO is a VERY long document with many divisions.

Can you tell me where exactly we might find the part or parts that Ellee Spier's petition is addressing. Page numbers would be most helpful.

Thanks so much,  
Debbi Conkle



**Petitioner's Statement 6\_28\_24.pdf**

61K



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Letter of Support for GardenQuest

---

**Nancy Goswami** <nancygoswami@yahoo.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 8:57 PM

To: "scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Greetings,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Ellee Spier and GardenQuest. GardenQuest offers an invaluable opportunity to provide hands-on sustainable urban gardening education to learners of all ages, in our community.

GardenQuest's commitment to fostering an understanding of sustainable gardening practices is vital in promoting environmental stewardship and enhancing local food systems. As an avid gardener and community member, I value this important asset.

The goals of GardenQuest align perfectly with the needs of our community and surrounding areas. By educating individuals about sustainable urban gardening techniques, Elle Spier is empowering residents to transform their spaces into thriving gardens, thereby enriching our community and promoting healthier lifestyles. Even potentially helping to eliminate local food deserts. GardenQuest's focus on sustainability and urban gardening education is commendable with its ability to inspire more people to engage with their environment.

The educational opportunities GardenQuest could provide, from teaching sustainable urban gardening, the infrastructure that assists to ensure increasing gardening potential, resulting in higher yields. Ensuring that more of our community members have access to quality nutritious foods. GardenQuest also provides an inclusive atmosphere where everyone can learn and grow. Offering a vital resource for home and school gardener that is crucial in building a community that values sustainable environmental and social practices.

Additionally, the accessible location offers small-scale field trips, student internships, and volunteer opportunities that will foster a spirit of collaboration and engagement among community members of all ages.

I urge you to support GardenQuest in its mission to provide learning opportunities in building a sustainable future for our community and others.

Together, along with GardenQuest, we can cultivate a greener, more sustainable community.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Goswami

As a neighbor of the Spier Family and a member of multiple gardening organizations in Bloomington, I strongly urge BZA to consider their request to operate GardenQuest in the Covenanter neighborhood. I have witnessed over the past seven years Ellee Spier carry out multiple projects responsibly and respectfully to improve community well being and make a Bloomington a more sustainable place to live.

Our schools and children need alternative avenues to learn about how to grow food and use resources wisely; GardenQuest provides a template for what can be accomplished at home. It is accessible to kids and families from multiple schools. Why make education challenging? Let citizens use the resources that they have at home to be neighborly and build a resilient community.

Beth Hollingsworth

**Sarah Jane Hughes**  
**1305 S. Brooks Drive**  
**Bloomington**

July 16, 2024

Mayor Kerry Thompson  
 City Council  
 City of Bloomington Board of Zoning Appeals  
 City Planning Commission  
 City Hall  
 N. Morton Street  
 Bloomington, IN 47401

Via email to [planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov); [council@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:council@bloomington.in.gov);  
[scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov)

Re: Opposition to the current requests for a special permit/variance or conditional use permit for a home office or for a certificate of zoning compliance to operate an outdoor enterprise within an R2 neighborhood under the auspices of GardenQuest, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and the d/b/a of "GardenQ4U" an outdoor enterprise in the R2 residential zone on the property owned by by Ellee and Brett Spiers for 2110 E. Covenant Drive

Dear Mayor Thompson, Members of the City Council, Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals, City Planning Department; and City Planning Commission:

Around June 12th, my husband and I learned that our neighbors, Ellee and Brett Spiers, were circulating a petition to gather support for a special permit/ variance or possibly for a "conditional use" permit to resume operations of their nonprofit at the corner of S. Brooks Drive and E. Covenant Drive. Their requests seem to include permission for a "home occupation" and an exemption of some kind from limits on the number of employees their nonprofit may have as well as permission to sell products for "fundraising" purposes to support their nonprofit. Their communications with others also mentioned a certificate of zoning compliance and potential change in the Unified Development Ordinance to enlarge activities permitted in the R 2 zone.

**I oppose the options regardless of the labels attached to them by the applicants.** I have slightly different reasons that reflect my assessment of differing criteria for approval, as set forth below.

I also **oppose a change in the parameters of the R2 Zone** to permit enterprises such as theirs and **urge that the City adopt limitations on beekeeping in a residential zone** in terms of the maximum number of hives on a residential property and the permissible locations for hives to reduce the public safety issues that neighbors of the Spiers' family perceive are associated with the placement and number of bee hives on the southeastern corner of their property close to the southern end of S. Brooks Drive.

### **I. Neighborhood Context**

My family's property does not abut the Spiers' property. But we live on the same block that has only six homes, including theirs, with four families reliant on S. Brooks as our sole means of ingress and egress from the block. We have lived in our home on this block since August 15, 1988, and have enjoyed respectful relationships with our neighbors on this block.

We have enjoyed knowing the Spier family and have allowed the immediate family to use our tennis court and to park on our property when they celebrated family milestones. We have placed trust in Dr. Spiers' services.

The Spiers have told neighbors that they no longer consult with S. Brooks Drive neighbors because no one supported their requests for City approval to install and operate a bicycle rest-and-repair stop at the corner of S. Brooks and E. Covenanter.

**Not true.** My husband and I were among the few neighbors that supported their effort to build a bicycle-rest-and-repair stop at the corner of S. Brooks and E. Covenanter. Indeed, I spoke in favor at a City board meeting held on Zoom. We also supported their petition not to install a new sidewalk on the west side of the block (the east side of their land) when they first bought the property. Other neighbors including at least one abutter did not speak against or for the application for the rest-and-repair stop.

The City denied permission for the bicycle-rest-and-repair stop – largely because many other neighbors on both ends of S. Brooks and some on East Covenanter expressed significant concerns about road safety and congestion if the rest-and-repair stop were built. The fact that some neighbors, but not all neighbors, objected to the rest-and-repair stop does not mean we should – or can – be dealt out of future plans the Spiers have for their property. Those who spoke against the project were exercising their right to civic engagement and speech and their rights as abutters and neighbors to object to uses in the neighborhood that may change traffic and pedestrian safety or other aspects of an R 2 zoned neighborhood.

We learned from a third party that the Spiers family had submitted requests for the special permit/variance or conditional use and a petition for a zoning change to permit expansion of their enterprise, we were surprised. We also were not aware that the City

had suspended operations of their nonprofit in recent months. We learned that, also, from third-party sources.

We subsequently communicated with neighbors about the Spiers' petitions to others in the Windermere Addition. Some of the group we communicated with supported and some who objected to the bicycle-rest-and-repair stop – about some concerns we had about the Spiers' plans for their property. Our memorandum signed by me and two other families on the block caused the Spiers to send a rebuttal on or about June 13, 2024, to the same distribution list. Fair enough.

The Spiers' June 13, 2024, memorandum expressly seeks support for “neighborhood-based garden education.” The memorandum, at the time I first saw it, claimed to have received “131 signatures” for a petition to the City to operate an outdoor organization that would provide “urban agriculture education at [their] urban farm.”

A major cause of concern to me is the number and location on the Spiers' property of bee hives that are causing some of us to be afraid to walk by. The bee population has expanded from one hive to the current three hives in the last few months -- two added earlier this year. The hives stand close to S. Brooks and too close in my opinion to the minimum setback for the R 2 residential zone. The hives sit about as far from the Spiers' house as possible. In recent months, the Spiers added two additional colonies/hives to the single hive present last season.

We learned the day before construction of a “bee wall” – that was late on Friday afternoon when City offices were about to close before Saturday construction. Ellee came by with a flyer about the bee wall. We had no effective opportunity to review the plans for the bee wall or seek the City's thoughts on its addition to our formerly quiet neighborhood at that point. So, as recently as this spring, abutters and close neighbors did receive information from the Spiers about plans – just not with sufficient notice to raise concerns in any formal City forum.

In June, I explained to Ellee that I have sensitivity to bee stings and that I am afraid of her bee hives. She told me not to worry because in October, they would move the bees from their current hilltop location close to Brooks Drive to behind the bee wall, which is roughly the same distance from the edge of the street but closer to another property and to our property. *Ellee's remark did not alter my concerns.*

The bee wall is too close to S. Brooks and to an abutter's property for everyone's safety. Ellee told one neighbor that the placement was necessary *because some members of her family are allergic to bee stings!* So, *abutters and neighbors including those who walk, bike, or run on S. Brooks are exposed to the hives, but the hives are positioned to be as far away from the Spiers' house as possible to reduce their risk? Unacceptable.*



The Spiers do not work near the hives without proper protective clothing. Do abutters, close neighbors, and those who use S. Brooks for exercise have protective clothing to walk on S. Brooks Drive? **That is doubtful and would be wildly unfair.**

Is it enough when the Spiers are working on the bee hives to post signs that bee hives are present? **No, not when the hives are so close to the road.**

The Spiers have the burden of showing that the special permit/variance or conditional use permit or whatever other permissions or amendments they seek are consistent with City ordinances that apply to their land and to the R 2 zone. I assume that they will try to establish their case in terms of the Required Documents and Submittals described on the November 3, 2023, version of the “Application for a Variation from the Zoning Code (Variance)” **or** with requirements for Conditional Uses described in sections 20.06.040(d)(6)(B) and (C) of the City’s UDO. *Their case for either form of relief should fail.*

## **II. Reasons for Opposition to a Special Permit or Variance**

As an application for a special permit or variance, the Spiers’ application appears to fail to meet their burden of proof in terms of at least three (3) of the five (5) “Findings of Fact” specified in the instructions. Here are my thoughts:

**Item 1 (physical characteristics pose unreasonable challenges making adherence to the Code “difficult”):** The Spiers bought a piece of land that was bare at the time of purchase. Thus, neither the land itself nor the location of buildings caused any challenge to their uses for a residence and a garden for their own consumption as many neighbors have.

The lot sits on a bend in E. Covenant Drive that is tough to navigate without oncoming traffic from vehicles, bicycles or scooters, and pedestrians. Essentially, from both directions on E. Covenant between High Street and S. Brooks drivers cannot see oncoming traffic. This street and this corner have all four types of traffic. The intersection of E. Covenant and Brooks also has obstructed views of traffic on E. Covenant – at least from the south end on which I live. Adding traffic or parking or both on E. Covenant will exaggerate the risks to everyone.

Any permission that brings more traffic to these streets will add to existing problems. This was a primary reason that some neighbors opposed the bicycle rest-and-repair stop that the City previously denied.

**Item 3 (conditions not created by the applicant):** The Spiers have created the property as they have seen fit. The issues they now face and that apparently

caused the City to order a suspension of some activities and impose a fine on the Spiers are entirely of their own ambitions, and thus of their own “making.”

The primary obstacle to the uses the Spiers have in mind is the property's location in the R 2 residential zone. The zoning would have been obvious when the Spiers' bought the property in the past 10 years. So, instead of encountering a surprise condition of the property, the Spiers *walked right into* the zoning issue they now seek relief from. That is not grounds for a variance or for putting the rest of the immediate neighborhood at the mercy of what the Spiers wish to do inside the City limits in a residential zone.

Additionally, it appears that the Spiers built a freestanding two-story structure on the northwestern end of their property to serve as a classroom for their GardenQuest, Inc. enterprise. The classroom seems to sit above a large, enclosed space and sits next to a multi-car carport and roof deck. At the time construction started on this structure, Ellee Spiers told me that the lower, enclosed floor would house two “commercial freezers” so that customers of her produce and other products could access their purchases easily.

I believe I saw building permits for the new structure mentioned in the prior paragraph in 2023, but I am unaware that the Spiers applied for or received permission from the City to operate their educational ambitions in the new space or to serve retail customers from it.

I infer from the recent actions by the City to suspend the enterprise's activities and to impose a fine that the Spiers *did not obtain necessary permissions or operating permits*. Thus, the Spiers were forced by City actions to commence their current well-coordinated effort to obtain permissions that the petitions being circulated describe. So, it appears that the Spiers gambled on either not getting caught in violations of some City rules or planned to seek various approvals long after they made what must have been a large investment in the new structure and its fixtures.

**Item 5 (detriments to the public welfare, alteration of the essential character of the neighborhood, or unreasonably impair the use of development of adjoining properties):** Ours has been a quiet, two-block street that intersects a thoroughfare. Traffic is sufficiently heavy that the City installed speed bumps at the request of some neighbors who live on E. Covenanter. Our block has five homes other than the Spiers' compound. The road is narrow, making use by more than one car at a time an exercise in avoiding the other vehicle and the drainage ditches on both sides of the road.

The Spiers' use of their property (unfortunately for them) falls under each of the three topics mentioned in Item 5 for different reasons:

- The current location of the bee hives and prolonged use of the road are “detriments to public welfare.” Vehicles, bicycles, kids’ scooters, walkers and joggers are faced with being close to the hives or finding other routes.

Not all vehicles can find other routes because they are servicing needs of the four houses south and east of the Spiers’ property on the southern block of S. Brooks, including ours.

The June 13, 2024, memorandum encourages support on the grounds that “[individuals] should be able to walk, bike, and/or use public transportation to access place-based educational experiences and volunteer opportunities no matter [their] age, gender, or the color of [their] skin.” Thus, persons who decide to frequent the Spiers’ enterprise appear to have more rights than abutters and close neighbors and other residents in the Windermere Addition.

- The “urban farm” and “educational nonprofit” they are creating and operating (until the recent suspension) alters the essential character of our neighborhood. The June 13, 2024, memorandum does not mention other uses that the Spiers apparently intend including on-site food preparation for sale to the general public by students to help sustain the nonprofit.

The location of the bee hives is impairing our use of our properties and the uses by neighborhood residents to S. Brooks as a walking and jogging avenue. As to the bee hives’ existence and locations, any increase in the number of hives or any less desirable placement of the hives than currently exists would be detrimental to neighbors, their properties, and the use of our block by runners and walkers from around the whole Windermere Addition. The bee hives’ numbers and location are at odds with the character of the immediate neighborhood.

- One property on our block has been on the market to sell or rent for more than a year. Ellee Spiers reported that some family has rented it beginning soon. Some prospective purchasers apparently balked at the extent of the operations on the Spiers’ property and the view of the “urban farm” equipment and other necessities.

Three senior neighbors – abutters all who lived on the block since the late 1950's, only one of whom survives – have been publicly opposed to the uses for which the Spiers are asking permission. The survivor may be the individual that the Spiers claim reported their uses to the City. Her view is that the plans are inconsistent with the residential quality of the block and neighborhood. She is entitled to her position as her property looks out on the fenced area on the eastern edge of the Spiers' property nearest S. Brooks Drive. Until last year or so, the large "Garden@4U" sign faced her front door. She also looks at the bee hives' current position on the top of an artificial mound on the same boundary with S. Brooks. (Until the bees arrived, I had assumed the mound was for some sort of sports practice.)

I cannot name another property in the Windermere Addition that was being used for agricultural education purposes or any uses like the uses the Spiers had made prior to the suspension by the City. And, Such use is outside the character of this neighborhood of established homes and a few condos.

- The Spiers make extensive use of the narrow road (S. Brooks) that is the egress means for four other houses, including ours. Builders' trucks and other vehicles often make passage difficult; deposits of gravel and other supplies are made to their land and sometimes onto the road. They also have had construction vehicles and workers' vehicles parked along E. Covenanter in a manner that made passage by others – vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles – harder. A major issue is the lack of information about how the Spiers plan to handle parking by customers of their produce and products or by groups coming for instruction.

The Spiers told some neighbors that their current construction project would be over by year's end. That project has lasted a long time and has caused additional parking on Covenanter and Brooks and contributed to less safe driving conditions in both directions on Covenanter and more noise.

The essential character of the neighborhood as it stood quite recently is being altered negatively with every step towards the Spiers' goals they take. This is a pity for all concerned, including the Spiers. Approval of the Spiers' plans would not be in the best interest of owners of close-by properties or of the Windermere Addition as a whole.

### **III. Reasons for Opposition to a Conditional Use Permit**

I appreciate that other criteria are used to determine eligibility for a “conditional use” permit from the ZBA. I note that “private schools” are considered appropriate for conditional uses in the R 2 zone. Sections 20.06.040(d)(6)(B) and (C), but private schools will be subject to licensure, inspections, and other forms of regulations. Will the Spiers’ educational enterprise be subject to other licensure, inspections, or forms of regulation?

I understand that sections 20.06.040(d)(B) and (C) are often cited as reasons why conditional use permits are denied by the ZBA. They certainly seem to make approvals by your Board of the Spiers’ application(s) less likely without significant, enforceable conditions.

From the sections of the UDO cited above, I gather that the permission sought must be (A) proposed in a manner and (B) with suitable accommodations to neighbors as to render them not harmful or bothersome to neighbors.

Efforts to discuss options with the Spiers since neighbors learned of the petitions for the special permission/variance/ conditional use have not resulted in changes in the Spiers’ plans insofar as we can tell. Effectively, Ellee and Bret Spiers have rebuffed suggestions that would make it easier for neighbors to support their plans. *It appears that they want what they want – regardless of how others may be affected.*

Thus, I conclude that unless the City or ZBA insists, the Spiers seem uninterested in any changes in their plans that would mitigate or minimize adverse effects on neighbors unless the ZBA or the City require changes. Their application for any “conditional use” currently described by the Spiers in applications or documents circulated in the neighborhood should be denied.

Shortly after we learned about the Spiers’ suspension and fine and about their applications for relief from various City agencies, three families on the southern block of S. Brooks raised these concerns in a document I participated in drafting and that we shared with other neighbors. I dispatched a copy the same day to Ellee Spiers. She shared her rebuttal document with me. It did nothing to calm my concerns. What did we get in response from Ellee Spiers? A rebuttal, not any offer to remedy concerns.

### **IV. The Spiers’ Alternate Option Is to Receive a Certificate of Zoning Compliance**

The same June 13<sup>th</sup> memorandum used to gather signatures on the petition mentions an alternative – a certificate of zoning compliance that would enable the nonprofit to provide “small-scale urban agriculture education indoors, in a residentially-zoned

neighborhood.” Under the current zoning ordinance, it appears that a certificate of compliance with zoning could not be issued.

Their plans do not comply with the UDO requirements. From other sources, it appears that they intend to have more “employees” than the R 2 zoning permits. They intend to use – and have already used – their property for outdoor activities.

There no doubt are more discrepancies between the UDO and their prior uses, which have included marketing meats provided by other producers in the surrounding communities to neighbors and the general public in email communications at prices marked up to match what Whole Foods charges for the same items or cuts. (Their description of pricing, not mine.) Sales of meats presumably are regulated activities. Does one need a license to sell meats in the City? In Monroe County? In the state of Indiana? I imagine so. Does one have to use a certified and supervised kitchen space if one plans to sell prepared foods to the general public? I imagine so as well.

#### **V. The Spiers Also Want the UDO Amended to Allow Small-Scale Urban Agriculture and Education Experiences Outdoors in Residentially Zoned Neighborhoods**

The June 13<sup>th</sup> memorandum also mentions a future campaign to amend the UDO to allow what the Spiers want to do in the R 2 zone. Any amendment of the UDO should be a widely publicized process with lots of opportunities for public participation and debate. I will not support such an amendment because it will have broad and negative consequences for the carefully crafted protections in the UDO for the R 2 zone.

## VI. Concluding Thoughts

The Spiers did not consult abutters with whom I am in contact before sharing their plans with other owners in the Windermere Addition and perhaps others around the City and seeking other owners' signatures on petitions we gather they intend to submit to the ZBA and other City agencies. That did not engender trust among residents who own the properties on the southern block of S. Brooks and others who are owners nearby on Covenanter and the northern block of S. Brooks.

It appears that the Spiers consulted others in their quest for approval to operate their nonprofit and urban farm in our neighborhood. We have identified two meetings with City boards and commissions that they attended in recent months. They may have had a pre-application meeting with the Covenanter Neighborhood Association principals as well. We had no notice of a meeting, if indeed one occurred, or any invitation to participate. *Don't abutters and close neighbors deserve timely notice of requests for meetings that must be held?*

Efforts by neighbors to alert other neighbors of the Spiers' plans have not been well-received by the Spiers. *The Spiers want what they want.* They do not want to hear our concerns.

The Spiers are trying to claim moral high ground in their campaign to get what they want, but that current zoning does not allow. Their June 13<sup>th</sup> memorandum claims they want to operate their enterprise (it really sounds like more than an educational nonprofit) "responsibly and respectfully" (see the last paragraph on page 2). I appreciate that tone of those adverbs, but based on conversations and email exchanges, it appears that they see the current situation as a one-way street: I have not seen, so far, respect for direct abutters whose uses and quiet enjoyment of their own properties are being frustrated and challenged by the Spiers' behavior and desires.

*Because they have shown little respect for abutters and close-by neighbors so far in the current campaign,* I see no reason to expect that "respect" will be part of the operations if the BZA or other City boards or the City Council grant any of the requests that they have made or apparently plan to make.

With no interest shown by the Spiers in accommodating neighbors' concerns about the bee hives' locations, I must oppose any relief the Spiers seek that imposes more on direct abutters and those who live close enough to be affected by the enterprise they seek to operate. I also am concerned about traffic increases and parking on E. Covenanter and S. Brooks (both ends). *I am sad that they have shown no interest in meeting neighbors part way.*

If you are inclined to grant any of the parts of their application – in whatever form the permission may take – **please help us by specifying enforceable conditions** on

numbers of participants, parking, expansion only by additional applications to your board or other City Agencies, and better locations of the beehives closer to their own house and farther away from S. Brooks and abutting properties with suitable fencing to prevent inadvertent contact with the hives by visitors. A serious fence around the bee hives and the bee wall would help allay my fears. (Some communities require a four-foot fence around hives.) Mandatory movement of both the hives and bee wall away from S. Brooks and from the lot lines on abutting properties would help.

Please do not grant a special permit/variance or conditional use permit or any certificate of zoning compliance without significant changes consistent with the requirements the City has specified for either a special permits/variances or a conditional uses.

If the Spiers continue to seek a zoning change to permit their use and similar uses in residential zones in the City, I would expect that a series of hearings with ample advance notice of dates and times and extensive opportunity for public comment would be provided to all concerned. I will participate in those hearings and invite others to join me.

So much information has come into light since mid-May about the plans and various campaigns the Spiers have used to rally support. I fully expect more information to emerge. Thus, despite the length of this letter, I reserve the right to file additional comments to respond to or rebut claims made by others as consideration of the Spiers' application(s) proceeds. I also will follow closely subsequent meetings on the application(s) the Spiers may make.

I take no pleasure in objecting to plans a family that I have liked are proposing. It is a sad state of affairs indeed.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Jane Hughes

Cc: Ellee Spiers





Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Attention: Neighborhood Response to Spiers' Requests**

---

Hadar Karmazyn &lt;hadar.karmazyn@gmail.com&gt;

Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 12:19 PM

To: Constance Cook Glen &lt;constancecookglen@gmail.com&gt;

Cc: mayor@bloomington.in.gov, planning@bloomington.in.gov, Jacqueline Scanlan <scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov>, City Council <council@bloomington.in.gov>, Dave Rollo <rollod@bloomington.in.gov>, morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov, justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov, desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov, gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov, sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov, ewyatt@mccsc.edu, ahennessy@mccsc.edu, apirani@mccsc.edu, cfr@mccsc.edu, ecooperman@mccsc.edu, rgrimes@mccsc.edu, bshurr@mccsc.edu, simoon@iu.edu, jafarmer@iu.edu, Debbi Conkle <debbiconkle@gmail.com>, "Conkle, Daniel O." <conkle@indiana.edu>, Sarah Wyatt Swanson <sarah.wyatt.swanson@gmail.com>, Ben@secretlycanadian.com, "Hughes, Sarah Jane" <sjhughes@indiana.edu>, "Barnes, A James" <barnesaj@indiana.edu>, James Glen <jglenin@gmail.com>, Mather-Boehm Deborah <dmbarch02@gmail.com>, raz.boaz@gmail.com, Indermohanvirk <indermohanvirk@gmail.com>, aralders@indiana.edu, maria martinez <maria3139090@gmail.com>, Jeannie Bower <supermom4365@att.net>, Glenn Gass <gass@indiana.edu>, Julie Gass <jma6385@yahoo.com>

To reinforce this letter, as a Bloomington resident living in closest proximity to “Gardenquest, Inc.” (a private urban farm owned by Ellee and Bret Spier located on South Brooks Drive), **I strongly oppose the petition to allow MCCSC, Indiana University or any student-learning activities on our quiet and private residential street!!!**

While we are all active supporters of sustainable living, the “Gardenquest, Inc.” **farm is imposing public and farming life on us to an extent that disturbs our own private living and safety**, from fear of hosting guests in our yard to fear of walking down our own street. We ask for your intervention to **bring regulation and balance** between the privacy and safety of nearby residents and promote **sustainable farming guided and supported by science**.

Bloomington city already offers multiple **public gardening and community education that promotes equality** (as they are not benefiting privately owned properties) <https://bloomington.in.gov/parks/community-gardening>.

Best,

Hadar Karmazyn

(resident of S. Brooks Drive)

[Quoted text hidden]



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## South Brooks Drive resident Diamond Mather Strong objection to proposed special use permit

---

Mather-Boehm Deborah &lt;dmbarch02@gmail.com&gt;

Fri, Jul 19, 2024 at 2:53 PM

To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

I am emailing you for my mother, Diamond Mather, who has lived at [1215 South Brooks Drive](#) since **July 1965**. The Spiers non-sanctioned commercial "educational" farm is directly across S. Brooks Drive from Diamond Mather's home for 59 years.

There have been so many issues with what the Spiers have done since moving in. South Brooks Drive is not their own personal back alley. The Spiers started years ago by getting Diamond Mather and her neighbor Maurice Biggs to sign off on the Spiers being required to put in a sidewalk along Brooks Drive. Trying to be a good neighbor my mother thought that would be ok because people walked on the quiet street. Since then so much has been put in this side easement along S. Brooks Drive that used to be a completely tree lined street. The Spiers have built an elevated fenced farm structure directly across from my Mother's property. In the "sidewalk easement" area they have built a concrete access space to the very large commercial fenced farm structure. Workers have blocked my Mother's driveway with their cars or trucks. Many times there are piles of gravel and other materials spilling into the street across from her drive. The Spiers chickens have been in the road in Brooks Drive and onto my Mother's property. Now there are beehives on top of a mound they built when they first moved in, across from her mailbox and where she puts her trash receptacles out for pickup. They have landed helicopters in the past on the property over the years. (Now there is no clear area to land anything). I have photos of all of these issues.

This was a beautiful, quiet, residential street. A commercial "urban farm" is a benefit to only the Spiers or other people who have signed their petition but live in other neighborhoods and have no interest in how the neighbors are affected, including property values. What once was a beautiful street to live on has now become a busy eyesore of a business that does not meet the zoning code.

**There are zoning ordinances for a reason.**

The Spiers knew what the property was zoned for when they purchased it but decided they were "entitled" to do whatever they wanted, then attempt to get special use permits to break the zoning ordinance.

Diamond Mather strongly objects to any special use permit for this property.

Diamond Mather &  
Deborah Mather-Boehm  
1215 S. Brooks Drive



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Support for 2110 E Covenanter DR

---

**Keri Miksza** <kjmiksza@miksza.com>

Sun, Jul 14, 2024 at 9:24 PM

To: "scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Dear Ms Scanlan,

I'm writing in support of re-zoning of 2110 E Covenanter Drive.

The work the non-profit does at this residence in regards to garden education is essential for the youth in our community. AND if the Indiana State Board of Education passes the new diplomas as is, which is incredibly work heavy for high school students, programs like this in neighborhoods near home and school...and along a city bus route...will be essential for high school students who lack transportation.

If you wish to discuss more, please reach out to me.

Sincerely,  
Keri Miksza  
2313 E Rechter Road  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
303-746-8986



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Letter of support

---

**Auden Pennington** <auden.pennington@gmail.com>  
To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

Tue, Jul 16, 2024 at 8:11 AM

Dear City of Bloomington,

I am writing this letter in support of Garden Quest's mission to provide urban gardening education in residential settings. As a high school resident that enjoys nature, I feel Garden Quest will improve and benefit the greater community. This opportunity will broaden the education Bloomington students receive and better educate them on gardening and climate topics. In turn this opportunity will benefit Bloomington's community and future by teaching the next generation.

Therefore, I support Ellee and Bret Spier's request to receive a certificate of zoning compliance (CZC) to allow GardenQuest, an education non-profit, to provide small-scale urban agriculture education indoors, in a residentially-zoned neighborhood.

Furthermore, I support an amendment to Bloomington's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to allow for small-scale urban agriculture education & experiences outdoors in a residentially-zoned neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Auden Pennington, Bloomington High School North Senior



Melissa Hirtzel &lt;hirtzelm@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**[Planning] 2110 E. Covenanter Drive Petition**

1 message

**Robinson, James Nelson** <jarobins@iu.edu>

Sun, Aug 11, 2024 at 6:07 PM

Reply-To: jarobins@iu.edu

To: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

Hello,

I am writing as a Covenanter Drive neighborhood resident to support Ms. Elisha Spier's petition for use of her property to further educational opportunities for young people in our community. I have lived in the neighborhood for over four years, have watched her farm grow and seen the improvements she has made. At no point have I found anything offensive or harmful. That her house will be opened for short periods to help young people learn and grow seems to fit perfectly with our community—a college town and a place where sustainable farming and ecology have long been values.

Please approve her petition.

Sincerely,

James Robinson  
1312 South Rechter Court

*NOTE: Beginning 2025, my email will change to [jarobins@iu.edu](mailto:jarobins@iu.edu). Please make changes in your contacts.*

James Robinson, Ed.D.  
Assistant Research Scientist  
Indiana Institute on Disability and Community  
Indiana University Bloomington  
[2810 East Discovery Parkway](#)  
Bloomington, IN 47408-9801  
[www.iidc.indiana.edu/cell](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cell)  
812.219.0140  
[jarobins@iu.edu](mailto:jarobins@iu.edu)



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

## Letter in support of Ellee Spier/Garden Quest

---

**Karen Sprague** <eurypterus7@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 17, 2024 at 7:58 AM

To: scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov

This is a letter I wrote to the local paper that should apply here. Please let Ms Spier continue her important work in educating the people of Bloomington and surrounding areas. We need more people like her.

Sincerely,

Karen Sprague  
281-881-3819

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Karen Sprague <eurypterus7@gmail.com>  
**Date:** May 5, 2024 at 7:08:12 AM EDT  
**To:** ckugler@heraldt.com  
**Subject:** Local environment-forward business

Hi Carol,

I moved to Bloomington last summer to work at the IU School of Public Health - I have fallen in love with the city and surrounding areas, and enjoy exploring and learning more about my new home. I stumbled upon an incredible operation almost right away, one that made me even more proud to live here... I wasn't sure if you were also aware, but I feel like the entire community should be.

I am referring to GardenQ (<https://gardenq4u.com/>). GardenQ founder Ellee Spier has transformed her entire backyard into a high volume-producing fruit, veggie and flower garden, complete with free-roaming chicken flock. While this may not be uncommon here, I believe the manner that she gardens is - she works with the earth to produce this bounty by using companion plants, her own compost (including Bokashi tea) to support microbial growth and increase soil health, planting following lunar cycles... all within an urban setting. She extends her knowledge to the entire community, namely the younger generation - Girl Scout troops, school groups, etc - to give them a connection to their food, allowing them to play in the dirt, taste delicious produce, and foster the importance of good food and good nutrition.

Ellee is a wealth of knowledge and a natural teacher. By visiting GardenQ, one can quickly see that you can grow food just about anywhere. The way she utilizes her back yard is a great example of what all of us can do regardless of growing space - who knew you could grow your own potatoes literally in a potato sack full of dirt?? It's inspiring to see that you could turn even a 6'x6' patio into a vegetable Eden with a little planning.

There is more than meets the eye here, though... Ellee is teaching these kids (and adults like me!) not only about gardening, but about the science behind it. The science of soil, water, plant growth/physiology, cover crops and nitrogen fixation, nutritional density, the importance of pollinators, and gardening with diversity, welcoming predator insects into the garden to eliminate the need for pesticides... proper food storage, freezing, canning, overall waste reduction - I am just scratching the surface here. I hope you can stop by and see what she is doing, as I am not able to properly convey her passion and talent through words. Ellee is inspiring the kids of Bloomington to take care of themselves and the planet, and it is absolutely joyous.

Thank you so much for your time - have a wonderful day!

Karen Sprague

Sent via microwave radiation



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

---

**Attention: Neighborhood Response to Spiers' Requests**

---

**Indermohan Virk** <indermohanvirk@gmail.com>

Thu, Jul 18, 2024 at 4:43 PM

To: Constance Cook Glen &lt;constancecookglen@gmail.com&gt;

Cc: mayor@bloomington.in.gov, planning@bloomington.in.gov, Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, City Council &lt;council@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, Dave Rollo &lt;rollod@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, morgan.brummett@bloomington.in.gov, justin.crossley@bloomington.in.gov, desiree.demolina@bloomington.in.gov, gretchen.knapp@bloomington.in.gov, sophie.suter@bloomington.in.gov

Dear City officers,

I write to ask if the 7/25 date to hear Ellee Spier's petition gives our community adequate time to address it. The Spiers have only shared piecemeal with us what they are asking you to do. Their request is not an inconsequential one; it will greatly affect immediate neighbors. I can report that not only is approval of their extensive projects likely to cause a disturbance of the peace, it already has.

I bring up the question of timing as, in all fairness, we neighbors have been at a disadvantage to make an argument against a petition that the Spiers likely took time to craft. We only managed to get our hands on the full petition today. As such, we have not been able to research it to our complete satisfaction. We do, of course, stand by the letter Connie Glen forwarded you. However, had the Spiers been fully transparent in sharing their actual petition, we may have spent more time on it and made our case in a stronger fashion.

Thank you for considering my question/request.

Sincerely,  
Indermohan Virk  
1301 S Brooks Drive

On Jul 18, 2024, at 1:08 PM, Constance Cook Glen &lt;constancecookglen@gmail.com&gt; wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



## MEMO

DATE: July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025

TO: Kerry Thomson, Mayor, City of Bloomington  
Eric Greulich, Development Services Manager, City of Bloomington Planning & Transportation  
Bloomington Plan Commission

FROM: Constance Cook Glen and James Glen

RE: UDO Proposal for "Urban Agriculture, Commercial" (ZO-18-25)

We appreciate the Plan Commissions' careful reading of our comments at the last Plan Commission meeting. To follow-up, please realize that we wish to be positive about the future of urban agriculture in Bloomington and yet, are writing to express our **opposition** to the "Urban Agriculture, Commercial" UDO proposal. We are educators, sustainability advocates, and responsible Bloomington citizens. We do not believe that this proposal will result in better urban agriculture and an increase in sustainability and environmental solutions in Bloomington. Rather, we think that it will tear apart neighborhoods and wreak havoc on the city. We should be working **together** to find solutions and better ideas. Please help us do that.

In short, we see no viable pathways for ZO-18-25 to be successful in residential neighborhoods across Bloomington. It is unworkable for neighbors and students alike and encourages conflict and liability for the city. We are concerned about many aspects of ZO-18-25, and several issues rise to the top:

- 1) The designation "Commercial" - (even for Conditional Use), opens up residential properties to business uses with very few restrictions or possibilities of enforcement outside of the Health department. While this proposal is for urban agriculture, once a commercial use of residential property is approved, it seems likely that there could be an expansion of commercial enterprises that – to paraphrase property law specialist Jeff Stake's words – destabilizes neighborhoods.
- 2) Safety first is clearly not part of this proposal, as it includes little in the way of safety requirements. For instance, no fences are required for educational activities even when properties face busy streets – consider that Bloomington pre-schools and public schools have stringent safety requirements. From our experiences as university and public-school educators, required background checks and trainings about numerous student issues are standard in educational settings. We don't see those provisions.
- 3) Similarly, no requirements are made for the safe use of chemicals or other agricultural products, although we see stipulations about soil quality. Certainly, it seems that the Spier family's goal is to be as organic as possible, but there is no control over others who might wish to use chemicals to increase garden yields.

- 4) It is our understanding, that the agreement signed by City Representative Margie Rice, puts into a contract several provisions between Ellee Spier and the Institute for Justice. Indeed, the "urban agriculture, commercial" change to the UDO seems to be forced on the city by an out-of-state organization that operates nationally and is opposed to many zoning regulations. We find this outside involvement to be confusing and confounding and ask that the city change this relationship. For reference, see the comments made by IJ representatives and recounted in the H-T:  
<https://www.heraldtimesonline.com/story/news/2025/07/28/bloomington-allowing-koch-backed-lawyers-tinker-with-local-zoning-laws/85339900007/> This is the url for the group: <https://ij.org/> And this is information about them: [https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Institute\\_for\\_Justice](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Institute_for_Justice) .
- 5) Glenn Gass has told us that he received a response from deputy mayor Gretchen Knapp, clarifying the role that IJ can have in our community. I quote: "As far as the Spiers' legal advocates are concerned, there is no co-drafting of legislation happening. They can provide comments; that is all." And: "The City agreed to talk to the Spiers and listen to their perspective, as we also agree to do with other residents." This is great to hear, however, the initial announcement about ZO-18-25 appears to be in contradiction with those statements:

This proposal was time-sensitive due to a legal agreement with a national nonprofit organization, which worked with the City's Legal and Planning & Transportation department to ensure Bloomington clarified its rules. We're now making good on that agreement.

<https://bloomington.in.gov/news/2025/06/20/6289>

The question that immediately arises is why the City would agree to a proposed plan that is time-sensitive and requires an agreement with an outside group. And— why there is a need to placate and cater to one family when the change impacts the entire city. We understand that the Spier family is persistent in their requests, and we encourage the City to listen to all. As additional food for thought: the Spier family has been in violation of numerous City laws since 2021 and has routinely broken laws the entire time we've lived here. We have not filed reports on these issues but think the Plan Commission should be aware of their blatant disregard for City laws.

- 6) Finally, we offer a question: Is this proposed change necessary? We already have a strong "Urban Agriculture" provision in the UDO. Ellee Spier is already doing most of what she wants and can be encouraged to work through other avenues to provide education. It is our opinion that the Spier family is requesting preferential treatment.

As Bloomington City residents who are opposed to the Spier family's plans, we would like to meet with City officials to fully explain our concerns. As neighbors who share a property line with the Spier family, we feel our voices should matter. There are numerous other concerns that we have, not the least of which is neighborhood conflict.

We think Bloomington is likely to be successful if functional and **legal** zoning boundaries are respected. We purchased our home on Brooks Drive 4.5 years ago and would **never** have done that, had we known that zoning would be ignored and a non-profit enterprise would open-up an outdoor business next door. The possibilities for traffic danger on a narrow, dead-end street are too frightening to contemplate. We were home when the 50 children arrived that Matt Austin glibly spoke about at the last PC meeting. We do not share his confidence in saying that it was fine. We disagree and know full well that one out of bounds child is all it takes to create a crisis.

We ask you to please vote against the proposal put in motion by the Spier family.

We write to support the Planning department's proposal to foster climate-action driven food sovereignty and food security in the Bloomington community (ZO-18-250). ***Specifically, we support the addition of a new accessory use option to properties in residential neighborhoods.*** The notion that an urban farm in a residential neighborhood is unorthodox, or worse, undesirable, is neither useful nor commendable in our times. We believe that there is a powerful case to support and encourage "farming" in our neighborhoods. Raising our own food affords so many positive opportunities.

### **URBAN FARMING:**

#### ***What it IS:***

Urban farming contributes opportunities to supply an alternative to importing food that may be contaminated, aged, and dependent on the political climate.

Urban farming draws neighborhoods together offering residents opportunities to volunteer as individuals and families, working for a common, healthy cause. The effort typically results in a sense of heightened community.

Urban farming is an exquisite educational opportunity. Teaching neighbors how to compost, how to grow, how to prosper without waste or chemicals, how an interest can become a skill, perhaps a passion is a desirable goal of any planning board decision.

Urban farming adds green space, attracts pollinators, absorbs rainfall, revitalizes the environment, IN ADDITION to improving nutrition, and creating viable neighborhood hubs.

#### ***What it ISN'T:***

Urban farming may sell produce, but its production is an accessory use. Its sole function will never be to make a profit.

Urban farming is not an operation limited to 180 days per year. To place an operational limit is to ignore the evidence that farms function and produce year-round.

Urban farming is not an enterprise that results in congestion, noise, or threatening to the quality of the neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to register our unconditional support for the proposed zoning ordinance, adding a new accessory use option *to include residential neighborhoods in our city.*

Janet and David James

2025 July 25

Dear Plan Commission,

My name is Jeff Stake, and I have taught Property and Land-Use Controls at the Law School.

I live just outside the City limits, but I did not oppose annexation and I hope to be within the City sometime.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

Next year the USA celebrates an important anniversary, 100 years since *Euclid v Ambler Realty*. In that case, the United States Supreme Court decided that zoning is constitutional. One of the reasons given for the result was that zoning protects property. It protects the financial, emotional, and historic human investments in property. Zoning protects property. The “urban agriculture, commercial” amendment will do more harm to property than good.

More important, zoning protects happiness. It does that by enhancing stability and fulfilling the expectations of people in the community. People have relied on the restrictions in zoning ordinances. Think about their reliance. People buy into legal rules when they buy their homes, making often the largest financial investment of their lives.

I also worry about the effects on neighborhoods. Allowing commercial farm uses will open a can of worms. It will lead to neighborhood strife, pitting neighbor against neighbor. It already has. This amendment will make our community more divisive.

Along with social division, this “new path” for commercial development will lead to more litigation, between neighbors and

against the City. The subjective discretion allowed by this new path will provide a great opportunity for anti-government organizations to challenge City decisions. Especially if the City loses those challenges (and even if the city wins) the litigation will decrease resources available for important City activities. And those possibilities provide challengers with a club for threatening the City when owners apply for permits.

Supporters of the proposed amendment say it will improve our food system. The effects on our food supply will be negligible at best. At worst, it will provide more people with food that has not been properly monitored for safety. How would people know whether dangerous pesticides or herbicides were washing into the gardens? I think it is the case that people in Bloomington were unknowingly putting PCBs on their gardens for years. It is one thing to allow people to grow their own food. When they do, they bear all the health costs of mistakes in their methods and they have a strong incentive to be careful. It is another thing to make it a commercial operation. When it is commercial, customers bear the costs of failures in oversight.

Bloomington is a small city; it is a short drive to farmland. If a person wants to grow food for commerce, such land is already available outside the City. Or, if a person wishes to engage in commerce, there are commercial zones in the City. There is no need to reduce the value of residential neighborhoods by allowing commercial operations that could be located a short distance away. The desire to fix our food system should not be allowed to lead to low-intensity farming practices that are inconsistent with saving the globe from climate change. Commercial agricultural uses could impede compact urban development.

Finally, new commercial activities permitted in residential zones would undermine faith in our local government and respect for government more generally. To maintain the legitimacy of government by respecting reliance on it's prior decisions and for the harmony of our neighborhoods and community, please reject the amendment proposing to allow "urban agriculture, commercial" in residential zones.

Thank you.

Yours truly,  
Jeff Stake  
JeffStake@gmail.com

July 30, 2025

To: Bloomington Plan Commission  
[planning@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:planning@bloomington.in.gov)

Dear Members of the Bloomington Plan Commission,

I am a Bloomington city resident and have been for 17 years. I've lived in Indiana for more than 40 years. Much has come to light regarding the proposed UDO agricultural amendment since I spoke at your last meeting, hence this follow-up letter.

I am writing to oppose the current proposed draft UDO amendment regarding commercial urban agriculture. As many others have already done, I request that you reject this amendment now pending before you. As a next step, I suggest that the City of Bloomington start over from scratch on a new amendment. Such an amendment should be based on proper surveys of the needs and desires of city residents and proper research on best practices for enhancing urban agriculture as demonstrated by other small cities. The MOU with Ms. Elisha Spier specifies that there be a second draft amendment proposed by October if the current amendment does not pass. It would be a lot of work, but it seems feasible that a second and much better draft amendment could be before you in the required timeframe.

### **Greening of Bloomington and enhancing its sustainability**

The current version of the UDO includes very early on a statement of the purpose for this set of regulations, quoted in part below:

*This UDO is adopted to:*

- (1) Promote the orderly, responsible, and sustainable development and redevelopment of the areas within the City in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and its components ...*
- (2) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change on our community;*
- (3) Promote the public health, safety, morals, ecosystem services, comfort, convenience, and general welfare;*
- (4) Protect the character and stability of residential, institutional, business, employment, and natural areas; ...*
- (7) Preserve and enhance the scenic beauty, aesthetics, and environmental integrity of the City;*
- (8) Encourage compatibility between different land uses and to protect the scale and character of existing development from the encroachment of incompatible uses;*
- (9) Regulate and restrict the location and intensity of use of buildings, structures, and land for trade, industry, residence, and other uses; ...*

Within the context of the UDO overall it is clear that increasing the “greening” of the City of Bloomington and increasing agriculture within the City of Bloomington are goals identified in the UDO itself (if not verbatim, at least implicit in statements in the UDO). This implies that education regarding these matters is similarly a good thing. There is no one I know of involved in this conversation in any way that disagrees with the basic idea that a greener and more sustainable Bloomington is a good thing.



If the City of Bloomington wants to encourage urban agriculture and education related to that, where's the staff or community-created research that summarizes best practices in other small cities? There are multiple lists of greenest and most sustainable small cities in the US. I have not found a single one that includes Bloomington, IN. Ithaca NY, comparable to Bloomington in many ways, is on a list at <https://www.ecowatch.com/greenest-small-towns-america.html>. No town on that list has anything comparable to the commercial agricultural activities proposed for Bloomington, as far as I can see. That doesn't mean such things don't exist someplace, but I looked reasonably hard. This is not to take away Bloomington's status as greenest city in Indiana, <https://www.wthr.com/article/news/local/bloomington-called-greenest-city-indiana/531-5852e074-d1ee-40e9-91d7-4109c13d5820>, but this is not exactly an intense competition.

We have heard that there is demand for the proposed activities, but only in the form of hearsay. What do real survey data say about the level of demand and community priorities regarding enhancement of urban agriculture in Bloomington? Where is the analysis to ensure that unintended negative effects have been thought through and prevented as best possible?

To sum up: There seems not to have been done, to date, the sort of basic research that is both straightforwardly done and needed to inform your work and our community regarding what could be a good policy question: how do we enhance the sustainability of Bloomington, enhance its greenness, and better educate our residents young and old? Our community deserves to be given good guidance that responds to community needs in a properly prioritized way. And the BZA, which functions as a safety net in such matters, ought to be given a clear and well-researched ordinance to use as a basis for its work.

### **What the proposed UDO amendment regarding urban agriculture is really about**

By now anyone who reads the Herald Times knows that the proposed UDO amendment is the result of a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Bloomington and Elisha Spier, who lives on Covenant Drive. That MOU seems to call for the city and Ms. Spier to work together to propose modifications to the UDO that would allow her to operate some sort of commercial school on the Spier property. It seems that:

- The MOU is not the result of a lawsuit.
- The Spiers have never been a client of the Institute for Justice. Still, somehow lawyers and staff of the Institute for Justice (IFJ) are involved in the modifications of Bloomington ordinances.
- If the first effort to modify the UDO fails, it seems that the city and Ms. Spier are obligated to work together to propose another ordinance within six months of the signing of the MOU, which seems to have been sometime in April.

The real answer to Mr. Holmes' question at the last meeting - what policy matter is being addressed here - is "none." Or at least none so far. The current proposed UDO amendment is designed to fulfill a legal obligation created in an MOU, not to address a generally felt and understood policy need or question. I am not criticizing the City of Bloomington for entering into the MOU. I do not know what factors led to this decision. Certainly the language of the MOU seems consistent with the idea that the MOU was created to avoid a lawsuit. Avoiding legal proceedings is generally good practice.

The proposed UDO amendment is thus clearly special law, that is, law crafted specifically to apply to a small set of people or things. It is disguised by creating a scope geographically larger than the Spier property on Covenant Drive. This is actually not, as far as I can tell, in violation of the Indiana Constitution. Still, special law is widely regarded as bad practice. The City of Bloomington certainly seems to dislike being the subject of special law by the Indiana Legislature. In zoning matters, this sort of thing is sometimes called "spot zoning" and widely regarded as bad practice. It's disguised spot zoning, but that is what this amendment is as of now.

One also has to wonder about who is actually involved in planning this UDO amendment. How much involvement is there by the Institute For Justice [IFJ]? A recent H-T article stated, “The IFJ [Institute For Justice] says on its website that it is a nonprofit law firm that aims “to end widespread abuses of government power and secure the constitutional rights that allow all Americans to pursue their dreams.” The IFJ seems to be a libertarian-leaning thinktank funded at least in part by some of the richest oligarchs in the US. It *has* done some good work. But work products created by Bloomington’s planning experts and community members ought to be the primary inputs in the development of Bloomington ordinances.

However, none of these preceding matters are the real core of the dispute between the household in question and its neighbors. This is not, as has been asserted, “not in my back yard”-ism. The core of this issue boils down to, “Don’t do things needlessly badly when I have to look at it from my front yard.”

I recently walked around Brooks Drive. No professional farmer would allow their property to be the unsightly and unorganized mess that now faces Brooks Drive – and I say that having grown up in a farming community. Haphazardly arranged wood pieces, planters, water equipment at all angles, and other miscellaneous junk and agricultural material go right to the edge of the pavement on Brooks Drive. Perhaps the Spiers have an easement freeing them of the minimum setback requirement (which I believe is 10’). If they have a setback, they don’t really seem to need one. There is a rather large area of grassy lawn downhill from Brooks drive on the south end of the Spiers’ property. It could easily be used for agricultural activities. The current (and as I understand it proposed) activities could seemingly easily be pulled 10 feet back from Brooks Drive and hidden from neighbors and passersby with evergreen plantings or human-made fences compliant with city ordinances.

The only piece of real estate really in question as regards the proposed UDO amendment regarding agriculture is *not* currently maintained and operated in a fashion consistent with these UDO principles:

- (4) Protect the character and stability of residential, institutional, business, employment, and natural areas; ...*
- (7) Preserve and enhance the scenic beauty, aesthetics, and environmental integrity of the City;*
- (8) Encourage compatibility between different land uses and to protect the scale and character of existing development from the encroachment of incompatible uses;*
- (9) Regulate and restrict the location and intensity of use of buildings, structures, and land for trade, industry, residence, and other uses; ...*

This has been called a matter of rights and pursuit of happiness. A foundational aspect of the UDO is the need to balance between one person’s rights and the rights of others. The character of the Covenanter Drive area is currently being corrupted. The manner in which agricultural operations are now taking place on Spier property is an affront to the scenic beauty of the area. The current and further proposed land uses are not of the scale and character fitting with nearby residences. The intensity of buildings proposed - particularly the height of greenhouses proposed in the ordinance modification - has not been shown by any real engineering and architectural analysis to be compatible with nearby structures. The current draft UDO amendment would not change any of these current issues. Everyone here has rights. The neighbors feel theirs are not being respected. The photographs in the H-T certainly seem to support their contention. This is not, as was stated at the last meeting, just a matter of one person’s desire to show one Girl Scout how to plant a tomato plant outdoors. If that were the case, no one would complain. And actually, if that *were* the case, such an educational activity could be done in any of the existing community gardens.

## **Bicycles**

The impact on bicycling safety was the issue that first concerned me regarding the proposed commercial agriculture UDO modification. There are many bicyclists who ride on Covenanter Drive – including me

and many very much faster Little 500 riders. There is a simple reason for this. If you are coming from any of the neighborhoods around or west of Covenant Drive, then Covenant is part of a good route out to IN 446. One rides Covenant across South College Mall Road up to Clarizz, from there to Moore's Pike and then on to IN 446. One thus avoids the intersection of College Mall Road and E. Moore's Pike intersection, which often feels very dicey on a bicycle. Cars aren't usually going very fast on Covenant because of the speed bumps, and those are easy to ride around on a bicycle. As a person who has run and ridden thousands of miles out 446 and beyond, I am concerned about the potential impact of traffic at the Spier residence on bicycle safety. It was asserted at the last Plan Commission meeting that all of the traffic issues near the Spier property were the cause of construction that is now finished. This does not match my personal experience. Going east on Covenant I have had to ride in the westbound traffic lane to get around vehicles in front of the Spier property. There is already one well-established use of Covenant for one very "green" activity - bicycling for recreation and for shopping. Has there been any analysis of the impact of the proposed changes on bicycle traffic and safety? I believe the proposed amendment will make me and others less safe riding bicycles on Covenant Drive. I will continue to believe that until there is a well-done analysis that says otherwise.

### Summary

It's a great goal to make Bloomington greener and more sustainable than it is today. It would be great for the City of Bloomington to set as a policy goal the increasing of local agriculture and related educational opportunities for children and in so doing increase the sustainability of Bloomington. If one takes this as a goal, there are at this point no data to suggest that the proposed UDO modifications related to commercial urban agriculture is a reasonable top priority as a next step. There isn't yet a thorough analysis suggesting that the proposed ordinance will actually aid urban agriculture in some meaningful way. There are certainly no cost-benefit analyses of the proposed ordinance modification, nor is there an oversight plan built into the ordinance for commercial agricultural activities.

Please, for the many reasons cited by many people who have spoken and written about this matter, vote against the current proposed but inadequately researched UDO amendment regarding urban agriculture. Keeping good faith with the MOU with Ms. Spier is at this point a requirement. City of Bloomington staff and other local parties can take the time between now and October to do the work needed to propose a well-founded and well-crafted new ordinance regarding urban agriculture – informed by surveys, studies of existing best practices, and needed engineering analyses. So doing could lead to achievement of a real and important goal – making Bloomington greener and more sustainable. I appreciate the interests of the Spiers. I hope that what they want to do can be done in ways that will fall within the bounds of a well-crafted UDO amendment and within the bounds of the neighborly respect that is characteristic of our community. And if what they wish to do is not easily doable within the city limits, then the example of Ithaca NY might be relevant. No city exists in isolation. Ithaca's strategy is to focus on agricultural activities and products within 30 miles of the city rather than in-city production. That is one of the strategies behind its ranking as one of the greenest small cities in the US.

Again, thank you for all that you do for the city of Bloomington. The Bloomington Plan Commission is engaged in matters that are of tremendous importance for our collective future. You are all heroes in my book, and I will hold to that opinion no matter how you vote on this issue.

Sincerely,

*Craig\**

Craig A. Stewart, Ph.D., IU '88, in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

*\*no copy of my real signature here given that this eventually ends up on the Internet*



Jacqueline Scanlan &lt;scanlanj@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

**[Planning] UDO letters**

1 message

**Gass, Glenn** <gass@iu.edu>

Fri, Aug 8, 2025 at 3:54 PM

Reply-To: gass@iu.edu

To: "planning@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;planning@bloomington.in.gov&gt;, "greulice@bloomington.in.gov" &lt;greulice@bloomington.in.gov&gt;

I received the UDO packet and am curious about why the only letter from my wife and I is from 2014. Perhaps I wrote too many or was hyperactive in cc'ing?

In any case, I would like at least this latest one to be part of the public record, or whatever the term may be. Thanks, Glenn

—

(To the Planning Commission, July 30, 2025:)

Dear Gretchen (Deputy Mayor Gretchen Knapp),

Thank you so much for your letter and the time and care you put into it. I really appreciate it. I will try to keep this brief as I in NO WAY consider myself a neighborhood "spokesman" - I will happily leave that role to the Spiers' immediate neighbors and people with actual knowledge of legal matters.

But the H-T article was certainly an eyebrow-raiser. The headline alone summed things up well: "Why is Bloomington letting a Koch-funded D.C. law firm meddle in local zoning affairs?" While there are plenty of documents that make it clear that this is exactly what is being attempted, I am glad that it might not be successful and glad to hear you say the City is not entrenched in the Spiers' corner. Still, I find Matthew Austin's comments in the H-T article troubling: "...the city has placated us and continued not to take action. So the only way to get action taken was to get a bigger bully to bully the city." (<https://www.heraldtimesonline.com/story/news/2025/07/28/bloomington-allowing-koch-backed-lawyers-tinker-with-local-zoning-laws/85339900007/>)

Wow, is this the way things work? "Get a bigger bully to bully the city"? To bully Bloomington? Why not leave well enough alone, leave residential zoning alone and not open a door for more ill-will or any angry person that wants a commercial welding shop in their garage? You mention that the City documents support urban farming "in the abstract" but do not specify what could or should be allowed. Should a Commercial enterprise of this scale be the starting point in deciding?

As you elegantly said in your email, "The issue at stake is not whether gardening is good or whether their enterprise is non-profit, but whether it is appropriate for the neighborhood... neighbor input will always take first priority." I think the neighbors have pretty well decided how appropriate it is. I really hope the City will listen and not be intimidated, from any direction.

Thank you very much again for your time and attention,  
Glenn and Julie Gass  
2211 E. Covenanter Drive