LOGAN SQUARE, HUMBOLDT PARK, AVONDALE

Demolition Along 606 Halted For 6 Months As City Looks Into Impact Of Gentrification

The ban will begin Feb. 1 and end Aug. 1.

Credit: Alisa Hauser/DNAinfo
A new development next to the Bloomingdale Trail.

Credibility: Original Reporting, On the Ground, Sources Cited

LOGAN SQUARE — It’s official: Chicago is hitting the pause button on demolitions along the 606’s Bloomingdale Trail in just a couple of weeks.

City commissioners on Wednesday approved a six-month ban on demolition permits along the western portion of the trail, specifically the area bounded by North, California, Armitage, and Kostner avenues, and Hirsch and Kedzie streets.

The commissioners then sent the ordinance to full City Council where it received final approval without debate. The ban will begin Feb. 1 and end Aug. 1.

The law, authored by Alds. Roberto Maldonado (26th) and Carlos Ramirez-Rosa (35th), is a direct response to gentrification-fueled displacement happening along the popular biking and jogging trail.

Home prices along the western portion of the trail have gone up a whopping 344 percent since 2012, according to a new DePaul University study released Wednesday.

The ordinance that was approved Wednesday is a scaled-back version. The original
Demolition Along 606 Halted For 6 Months As City Looks Into Impact ... https://blockclubchicago.org/2020/01/15/6-month-development-ban-alon... version called for a comprehensive 14-month development freeze — no demolition permits, construction permits and zoning changes — and a larger impact area. Mayor Lori Lightfoot did not support the original version but supports the approved version for its "shorter timeframe" and "narrower geography."

Maldonado and Ramirez-Rosa have said the ordinance is more than just the ban itself. The ban, they said, will allow local leaders to get the time they need to craft longterm policy solutions.

Gary Jimenez, 19, was one of many neighbors to testify in support of the ordinance at City Hall Wednesday.

Jimenez, a volunteer with Logan Square Neighborhood Association, told Block Club he and his family were forced to leave their apartment of 10 years in 2015 after their landlord hiked up the rent $500 on account of exterior repairs. The apartment was located just a block away from the trail, near California and North avenues.

"I remember it being a shock," Jimenez said of the rent hike. "I really liked my house. I grew up there. I know every part. I knew every street. This was my neighborhood."

Jimenez and his family moved to West Garfield Park before finding a place in Humboldt Park, where they currently live.

The 19-year-old said his family has settled into their new home but he still hasn’t been able to shake what happened in 2015.

"It was heartbreaking to tell my friends: It finally happened to me. I have to move to a brand new spot," Jimenez said. "The worst part about it was after the move having to pass by my neighborhood and seeing the changes, from my neighbors and friends living there to seeing new faces."

"It was really sad to see everything leave. It was literally like a part of my childhood left," he added.

The ordinance remains unpopular with other residents, however. Some say it strips people of their personal property rights and will hurt economic growth.

Dolores Wilber, who owns a condo in the 1400 block of North Western Avenue, said she was glad the ordinance stopped at California Avenue.

"But why go south of North Avenue?" Wilber said. "I think the development along Humboldt Park on California is a great asset to the stabilization and safety of the neighborhood. That's our perspective."

Ald. Daniel La Spata, whose 1st Ward includes a large portion of the trail and surrounding area, wasn’t a co-sponsor of the original ordinance but told Block Club he supports the approved ordinance.

La Spata said he supports a short-term ban on demolitions, which have great environmental, economic and social costs in Chicago. Additionally, he said, this
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