



Legislation Text

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Columbus is facing an affordable housing crisis, the cost of housing has rapidly increased alongside rising rates of homelessness, housing instability, and eviction. At the same time, many faith-based organizations and non-profit organizations are looking for ways to put hundreds of vacant and under-utilized parcels they own in use to meet the needs of their community and address the housing crisis.

High barriers to affordable development are particularly challenging for small, non-profit organizations to overcome, given that they often have limited levels of development expertise and lack flexible capital that can help them withstand time-consuming and unpredictable red tape. Faith-based and nonprofit organizations have highlighted opposition from area commissions and lengthy permitting and zoning barriers as key impediments to building affordable housing on their land.

There exists a need to reduce barriers to affordable housing development for these faith based and non-profit organizations that own developable land, but have less capacity, capital, and experience to support the development of affordable housing.

This ordinance creates a Yes In God's Backyard Pilot Program and authorizes the Directors of the Departments of Development, Building and Zoning Services, Public Utilities, and Public Service to promulgate rules and regulations to implement the program with the purpose of expediting affordable housing developments through the zoning, permitting, and approvals processes when the developable land is owned by a faith-based organization, an educational organization, and/or a non-profit organization that meets program criteria. Organizations who meet program criteria will be eligible to undergo an expedited site engineering plan review and building review process and will be able to undergo a shorter period of review with Area Commissions.

Fiscal Impact: No funding is required for this legislation.

To create a Yes In God's Backyard (YIGBY) Pilot Program and to authorize the Directors of the Departments of Development, Building and Zoning Services, Public Utilities, and Public Service to promulgate rules and regulations as necessary to implement and administer that program. (\$0.00)

WHEREAS, Columbus is facing an affordable housing crisis; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of parcels of developable land are currently owned by faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations that face high barriers to creating affordable housing on these properties; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary and appropriate for the benefit and welfare of the City and its inhabitants to reduce barriers to the development of affordable housing by these entities, **NOW THEREFORE,**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That A Yes in God’s Backyard (YIGBY) Pilot Program is hereby established within the Housing Division of the Department of Development for the purpose of supporting affordable housing development projects proposed by faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations upon land that they own for affordable housing development projects in Columbus.

SECTION 2. That the following conditions will apply to the YIGBY Pilot Program:

A. "Faith-based organization" is one that is exempt from federal income taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the "Internal Revenue Code of 1986," 100 Stat. 2085, 26 U.S.C. 1, as amended, and provides charitable services to needy residents of this state.

B. "Educational institution" means a not for profit organization holding an effective certificate of authorization issued under section 1713.02 of the Ohio Revised Code.

C. "Nonprofit organization" means any non-profit organization as defined by section 1702.01 of the Revised Code.

D. Any affordable housing development project approved under the YIGBY Pilot Program shall comply with all affordability duration and income targeting requirements applicable to the City of Columbus Community Reinvestment Area program or any successor affordability program adopted by Council.

SECTION 3. That the YIGBY Pilot Program will be available for faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and/or nonprofit organizations that are seeking to develop or co-develop CRA-eligible projects on parcels they owned on or before January 1, 2025. Applicant organizations shall retain a controlling interest in the subject property for the duration of any affordability period required by the City.

SECTION 4. That the Housing Division will review applications for participation in the YIGBY Pilot Program for eligibility and will provide notice of approval or denial of an application within 30 days of receipt.

SECTION 5. That, notwithstanding any provisions of the Columbus City Codes to the contrary, the Directors of the Departments of Building and Zoning Services, Public Utilities, and Public Service are hereby authorized to promulgate rules and regulations entitling YIGBY Pilot Program participants to the following at no additional cost to the applicant:

- A. To receive an expedited site engineering plan review and building review process;

The Directors are further authorized to establish administrative procedures and service timelines for YIGBY Pilot Program applications, provided that such procedures do not require additional appropriations or the creation of new fees.

SECTION 6. That the Director of the Department of Development is hereby authorized to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement and administer the program. Participants will not be assessed additional fees related to application or reviews. The Director of the Department of Development may revoke or suspend participation in the YIGBY Pilot Program for any project found to have materially misrepresented eligibility, affordability commitments, or ownership control, subject to written notice, an opportunity to be heard, and an opportunity to cure.

SECTION 7. That the Housing Division of the Department of Development shall be required to report back to Council annually during the pendency of the program on the program outcomes for the year, which report shall include, at a minimum:

- A. the number of applications received and approved;
- B. the number of housing units proposed and constructed;

C. the affordability levels served;

D. the average time saved in permitting review process compared to standard processes; and

E. any administrative or regulatory challenges encountered in program implementation.

SECTION 8. That Council shall evaluate the effectiveness of the YIGBY Pilot Program in calendar year 2027 and determine whether the program merits extension for an additional two years. If Council determines that the program merits extension, Council may extend the program(s) for no longer than one additional two-year period. If the Pilot Program proves successful, Council may consider language to codify the program at any time.

SECTION 9. That this Ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.