

Ann Arbor City Council Regular Session: December 15, 2025
Email Redactions List Pursuant to Council Resolution R-09-386

| Sent Time | TO | From | CC | Redactions | Reason for Redaction |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------|----|----------------------|----------------------|
| 8:19pm | Lisa Disch & Cynthia Harrison | Tracy Jensen | | Personal Information | Privacy |

From: [Tracy Jensen](#)
To: HuronHighlands@groups.io; [Disch, Lisa](#); [Harrison, Cynthia](#)
Subject: Re: [HuronHighlands] Neighborhood Watch
Date: Monday, December 15, 2025 8:19:39 PM

This message was sent from outside of the City of Ann Arbor. Please do not click links, open attachments, or follow directions unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

Hi everyone,

Not to beat this to death, but our counsel person Lisa Disch sent a response to our listserv after she got an email from Ralph that was copied to all of us. She couldn't reply because she's not officially on the list serve, so I posted her message for her, but she pointed out that one of her sentences had a double negative that could lead to some lack of clarity. So below is the corrected version.

Also, I wonder if there are any signs that could go up that would really reflect the togetherness and commitment we have to a connected and inclusive community, without without using the word "watch". Truly, we are a neighborhood of where we shovel for each other and take each other to the emergency room, and honestly one of my neighbor friends was helping me clean my kitchen last night. :) Maybe there are signs that would present the cohesion that we have and the commitment we have to safety and inclusion, without using the older model language. This was just an idea off the top of my head. The words I would use to describe us are: kindness, caretaking, and community.

I wholeheartedly agree that outdoor band shells matter. But I think there are fundamental differences about how several of us on this thread think about development and building a tax base. That's nothing new, so I won't rehash it.

Also, I know you've worked hard on many City issues over the years Ralph, and I do want to be clear that I appreciate all the work you've done - including in maintaining this listserv!

Dear Huron Highlands Neighbors,

I appreciate Ann Arbor and feel lucky to live and work here. And I couldn't agree more with the sentiment that "we are not a perfect city" (Katz email). In my judgment, "Neighborhood Watch" signs do not make our community better. I support the Eyer-Harrison resolution that Council will vote on tonight, which has significant support in academic research.

To understand what motivates this resolution, it is important to be clear-eyed about what Ann Arbor is today—a place that is lauded for its livability, great restaurants, fabulous music scene of all kinds. All these things are true. It is also true that in Ann Arbor ranked as the 8th-most economically segregated city in the US in 2015, according to a well-respected study by Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute ranked ("Segregated Cities," p. 56). The Study also notes that where you find economic segregation you also find segregation by "race," occupation, education, and more.

Let's be clear that you can find segregation of this kind even where you do not find explicitly discriminatory laws and consciously discriminatory attitudes. I do not believe that segregation of any kind and is something that most Ann Arbor residents today would choose or endorse. Nonetheless, it is a fact in this City today—and it does separate groups of residents in predictable ways.

This is the problem with Neighborhood Watch: separation affects what people perceive as "different." Neighborhood Watch alerts people to watch out for difference—which is a troubling message in a context of segregation. Here's a good passage from a 2016 article by Adeoye Johnson in the *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change*:

"[Neighborhood Watch] would seem to be a natural protective mechanism to ensure that the social solidarity that defines a community remains intact. While positive in theory, ultimately these groups lead to very dangerous situations when built on the assumption that what is 'different' is inherently suspect and dangerous" (490).

We are fortunate that Ann Arbor is not an incubator for vigilante violence. It is not a place where the most "dangerous situations" occur. I do not believe that the City's block watch programs encourage violence. But that is not the point. The point is the context of segregation, which is a fact of life in Ann Arbor, whether we like it or not. In this context, a Neighborhood Watch sign cannot help but send a message of surveillance and suspicion to anyone who has learned that some people perceive them as "different."

It is not being "thin-skinned" to point this out and to call for these signs to be taken down. Taking them down will do very little harm

and very much good.

Lisa

"Segregated Cities," Martin Prosperity Institute.

<https://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/mpi/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Segregated-City.pdf>

"Neighborhood Watch," Adeoye Johnson.

<https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?>

[article=1194&context=jlasc#:~:text=Trevor%20Bennett%2C%20author%20and,1960s%2C%20as%20one%20of%20a](https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1194&context=jlasc#:~:text=Trevor%20Bennett%2C%20author%20and,1960s%2C%20as%20one%20of%20a)

Lisa Disch | Ward One City Council Representative

City of Ann Arbor

301 E. Huron Street

Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8647

ldisch@a2gov.org | Watch City Council Live At: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/communications/ctn/Pages/watch.aspx>

On Mon, Dec 15, 2025, 5:02 PM MIBrigidAnn via groups.io [REDACTED] wrote:

My perception of the neighborhood watch signs has always been that we were a safe neighborhood for our children. If they needed help, they could go to any door. That could've been falling off your bike, some child bullying another, or mom it just isn't home from work yet. My grandson and I used to look for the signs as we drove through various neighborhoods.

Brigid

"If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." - George Orwell

Sent from [Proton Mail](https://protonmail.com) for iOS.

----- Original Message -----

On Monday, 12/15/25 at 16:41 Tom Stulberg via groups.io [REDACTED] wrote:

Yet the proposed Comprehensive Land Use Plan promotes economic segregation.

It is designed to add lots of expensive housing and hope for indirect benefits in the long run (Lisa Disch emphasized in the long run). The mayor emphasized that this is a market rate housing plan, not an affordable housing plan.

There will be few if any modestly priced homes created in the city. And the modestly priced homes are the ones that will be torn down and replaced with more expensive multiplexes. This will reduce the supply of homes in the modest priced segments of the market and thus ACCELERATE the price increases in those segments of the market.

So while people won't be afraid to walk down the street because the Neighborhood Watch sign has been removed, they also won't walk down the street because they can't afford to live there.

From: HuronHighlands@groups.io <HuronHighlands@groups.io> on behalf of Ralph Katz via groups.io

Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 4:23 PM

To: HuronHighlands@groups.io <HuronHighlands@groups.io>

Subject: [HuronHighlands] Neighborhood Watch

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

From: **Ralph Katz** [REDACTED]

Date: Mon, Dec 15, 2025 at 4:22 PM

Subject: Re: Neighborhood Watch

To: Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>

Cc: Harrison, Cynthia <CHarrison@a2gov.org>

Lisa,

Thanks for your response but I would tend to disagree with all of it. Ann Arbor has become an elitist city based on money, where City Council is busy dozens resolutions every month that benefit the real estate interests who in actuality run the city.

If you look at cities 1/10 the size of Ann Arbor around the state, places with less per capita income have more parks and (something close to my heart) more bandshells. But our parks are hurting for maintenance money and our civic band has to play out in the open while our bandshell crumbles. Are people afraid of Neighborhood Watch signs there?

Our Police department appears to be the same size now as the department in Chelsea. This is not welcoming, it is scary. Our police employees are great, but we aren't giving them any tools. We give all the tools to real estate developers to tear down affordable neighborhoods.

If what you say is true, then all the residents of the two new complexes north of our neighborhood, who walk down our street every day, must feel threatened when we say "hello" to them. Just where is the explosion of people afraid of Neighborhood Watch signs? There was no study and there is no data. I dare you to find them. This is just untruthful rumor and innuendo.

Ralph

On Mon, Dec 15, 2025 at 11:48 AM Disch, Lisa <L.Disch@a2gov.org> wrote:

Good morning Ralph,

I appreciate Ann Arbor and feel lucky to live and work here. And I couldn't agree more with your sentiment that "we are not a perfect city". In my judgment, "Neighborhood Watch" signs do not make our community better. I support the Eyer-Harrison resolution that Council will vote on tonight, which has significant support in academic research.

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Lisa Disch | Ward One City Council Representative

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From: Ralph Katz [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 8:38 AM

To: Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>; Harrison, Cynthia <CHarrison@a2gov.org>

Cc: HuronHighlands@groups.io <HuronHighlands@groups.io>

Subject: Neighborhood Watch

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Councilpersons Disch and Harrison,

35 years ago, at my request and after consulting with our neighbors, the City of Ann Arbor installed a Neighborhood Watch sign on Skydale in order to promote the feeling of safety. Regardless of the city having renamed the program, our feelings remain the same.

I don't claim to speak for everybody in my neighborhood, but also do not know of anybody who finds our Neighborhood Watch signs intimidating.

We are not a perfect city, even though a lot of people would like this to be the case. According to maps published monthly in The Ann Arbor Observer, our Northside neighborhood is one of the safest in town, but crimes do occur. Less than most other parts of the city, Northside cars *are* sometimes stolen, houses *are* sometimes burglarized (ours was 10 years ago), and sometimes there *are* other personal crimes up here, including a murder recently. These things are unfortunate, but they happen everywhere.

It is difficult for me to imagine what kind of people feel threatened by the peaceful vigilance which our Neighborhood Watch signs promote. The only thing that comes to mind is that Realtors may perhaps be bothered when asked about our Neighborhood Watch signs by prospective buyers. In general, though, the idea that our Neighborhood watch signs both some people appears to me as thin-skinned, silo-ed, self-seeking and, quite frankly, Disney-esque.

We bought our houses to raise our children and grandchildren, and absolutely *nothing* is more important to us. As such, we *need* to promote peaceful vigilance, and Neighborhood Watch signs are part of this. The signs do nothing but help us feel safe.

And please consider also that taking down our Neighborhood Watch signs *impinges on our right of free speech*.

It is not our fault if some people continue to be bothered, whoever they may be.

We want our Neighborhood Watch signs to stay.

Sincerely,

Ralph Katz


[Ann Arbor 48105](#)


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Tracy Jensen
