

The idea of adding businesses to neighborhoods is not a good idea. My family's experience is a good example! When we moved into our house in 1973, a next-door neighbor had a stained glass business that he ran out of a building in his back yard. He held classes and sold materials for making glass windows. He would smelt lead for the glass channels and one morning, I caught him dumping with the aid of an employee, a heavy container of smelting impurities on the gravel road in front of my house. Having a degree in both biology and chemistry, I knew the danger those tailings posed as they contained impurities of heavy metal. Judging from the difficulty they were having just moving it down the road, I knew it contained lots of lead. I saw the city attorney who was at that time (1980) Bruce Laidlaw. He sought to enforce the zoning restriction of operating such a business in a residential neighborhood. The EPA was involved since the contamination took place close to a drain which leads directly into the large underground tunnel for Malletts Creek. The results showed the road bed was contaminated with both lead and arsenic down at least 6" indicating this wasn't the first time he had deposited the waste on the road. This lead to a protracted case over three years before the ZBA and then to the Circuit Court of Washtenaw County before Judge Edward D. Deake (File NO. 81-20333-CZ). This took place over three days starting on the 17th of July 1981. I have copies of not only the court case but the ZBA rulings if you would like to read them.

We had a young son at the time, whose kidneys ended up being damaged severely and his young life was filled with testing and urology doctor visits. Through careful dieting, he was able to prolong the inevitable kidney failure which has lead to a kidney transplant. Now because of immunosuppressants and Covid along with reduced vaccination rates, he has to be very careful of exposure to others. The point I hope you take from this is that opening up neighborhoods to what seem to be benign businesses, could as in our case, result in life changing events!