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**Sent:** Friday, May 21, 2021 5:01 PM  
**To:** Reform, Economic <[EDRP@cincinnati-oh.gov](mailto:EDRP@cincinnati-oh.gov)>  
**Subject:** [External Email] Fwd: Reform proposals from Bill Collins of Madisonville

External Email Communication

TO: The Economic Development Reform Panel  
City of Cincinnati  
Cincinnati, Ohio

To whom it may concern:

Good afternoon. This is Bill Collins. I'm a 69-year-old married retiree who has lived in the City for 33 years, and have been a homeowner in Madisonville for 28 years. For most of the time that I have lived in Madisonville, I've been active in the community, often around parks and schools issues -- the real drivers of development, in my humble opinion -- and some also, especially early on, in development issues. Frankly, in recent years, I have stepped away from development issues -- starting around 2013-2014 -- as I sensed it was getting dirtier and dirtier in Madisonville and Oakley, as is evidenced now by all the indictments at City Hall. Still, though, I have followed the issues, and learned a lot about how development policies should not be done.

**MANY REFORMS ARE NEEDED, BUT I'LL FOCUS ON FOUR (4) REFORMS HEAR IN ORDER TO "KEEP IT SIMPLE"**

Overall, the problem re: the modern approach to development decisions in this municipality is that the protocols for vetting proposed developments and the corporations that do development, is opaque at every level -- City staff, elected officials, and in the communities via the City-recognized community councils. Thus, these processes are poorly defined, in practice if not actually in written policy. The result? As one might expect, the result of this is a "system" rewards "insiders" who connections to high-priced lawyers and lobbyists who know how to "game" this opaque system. This, ultimately, is what incentivizes the payola that we see now.

Since John Cranley, a former developer lobbyist prior to his election as mayor, was elected in 2013, this opaqueness and insider dealing has gotten much worse at all levels -- among elected officials, with City staff decisions, within various city boards and commissions as well as within community councils. I've watched it happen. And, IMHO, many of the most obvious abuses have been the most visible here in Oakley and Madisonville.

Here, in order to keep it simple, I'll Advance four (4) suggestions:

**(1) Require City candidates to publicly report any professional connections that they have to developers who come before the City seeking tax breaks and subsidies.**

In recent years, we've had two mayors elected -- Charlie Luken and John Cranley -- who prior to their elections (2005, 2013 and 2017) did lobbying work, in Cranley's case in many cases doing that lobbying work specifically for developers -- specifically in his

role with KMK Law. For that and other reasons, there needs to be a transparent process where these professional connections by mayoral and council candidates are reported publicly and posted on some kind of accessible online database for voters and citizens to view easily.

In Cranley's case, in Madisonville, until late 2013 he worked for KMK Law, the lobbyist for the real-estate affiliate of Medpace, Inc. Soon after his election in 2013, Cranley did a tremendous amount of work to push the Madisonville Community Council, the Cincinnati Public Schools and the Ohio Department of Transportation to grant Medpace's wish to build a cut-through road to Medpace's corporate campus from the Red Bank Expressway. This cut-through road, now named "Medpace Way," cut through and eliminated the athletic field at our neighborhood public school (CPS), John P. Parker School.

**(2) Just as the City's HR office does background checks of prospective senior-level City employees, the same should be done over any developer who asks the City for a City subsidy or tax break for a building project.**

Before any development proposal is presented by City staff either formally for a discussion at a community council meeting or informally to a community council president, background checks need to be made on the leaders of the company making these proposals for taxpayer-subsidized development.

Please note that today, when the City hires senior managers, part of the HR process is to do background checks. So why not do them on developers? Specifically:

- + Hire outside independent HR contractors to do all the background checks,
- + Next, make that information available to all the City staff and elected officials who are tasked with passing judgment on development deals,
- + Then make that information available to community councils and the media before any discussion takes place between developers and community councils, again for City-subsidized development.

*[If a builder does not seek taxpayers subsidies of any kind -- include subsidies by ODOT for road connections -- I don't feel that the background checks should be required. Also, in order to get an idea why background checks are needed, I invite you to view the piece posted by the Channel 9 WCPO "I Team on Thursday, May 20 which reveals the suspicious dealing of Christopher Hildebrandt, the owner of the Morelia Group, in Sycamore Township and for projects in Oakley and Madisonville. See <https://tinyurl.com/2b94dsxv>]*

**(3) Community Councils should not be allowed to grant multiple community council memberships to developers or corporations active in that community.**

In Madisonville we have had, and I think still have, a situation where developers are allowed to create multiple LLCs, and with those multiple LLCs take our multiple (5,6, 7, etc.) memberships in the community council and vote those 5,6, or 7 times in community council elections. Although this process, again, is opaque, the scuttlebutt in Madisonville is that the development organization of Medpace mentioned above took out multiple community council memberships, via its multiple LLCs, and "voted" them all for a candidate in 2017 and 2019 who has been very friendly to Medpace. The rumor is that it was those multiple votes that were voted by Medpace that were the margin of victory for this candidate in 2017 when she was first elected.

**4) There needs to be clear rules about what kinds of community projects in neighborhoods that the active developers in that community can support financially with its "charitable" contributions.**

Also, those contributions should never be done anonymously, and should be reported at CC meetings and available for public review on a city-maintained database online. Many times these contributions are made for arts projects, parks projects, etc. where none of the money goes to individuals. But sometimes money donated in this way, as we have seen in Madisonville, goes to projects that employ local people and/or their adult children who support the donor on development issues before the community council.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Best regards,

Bill Collins  
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