

Dixwell Resident Press Conference Statement

We, concerned residents of Dixwell impacted by recent development and rezoning proposals have come together after months of meetings and efforts to have input in these decisions. We demand that we be given decision making power **NOW** and moving forward throughout all development projects and related proposals affecting our neighborhood.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed rezoning of the Dixwell corridor. The City is proposing major zoning changes from the intersection of Dixwell and Tower Parkway and north along Dixwell Avenue to Munson Street.

- This rezoning **was not initiated** by residents and
- This rezoning does not **does not have the informed consent** of Dixwell residents and neighbors
- The City has not been forthright at any public meetings about these changes.
- **The rezoning will have a significant impact on the residential part of the Dixwell corridor**
 1. This includes the ability for developers to build health clubs, cafes, bakeries, up to 7-story mixed use market-rate buildings **like 201 Munson** (a building most residents in this neighborhood cannot afford to live in), and other commercial businesses right next to single and multi-family residences.
- This may sound good initially, but the City **has not** examined the impact these zoning changes will have **on the people who have lived here for generations and built this historically black neighborhood, which was intentionally impacted by racist zoning policies such as redlining.**
- We stand here today as a **growing, organized group of residents** who are deeply concerned about the impacts of this rezoning proposal on our community. Here are some major concerns we have identified:
 1. Currently, there are sections of Dixwell Avenue that are zoned only for residences. The City is proposing that these residential sections of Dixwell be rezoned and opened up to commercial developments.
 - This means there will be commercial businesses like the ones on Broadway Avenue situated **right next door** to one and two-family homes in Dixwell
 - The City is proposing that buildings up to 7-stories high (like Winchester Lofts and 201 Munson) be allowed on Dixwell Avenue

- There will be less parking requirements for developers, which means new residents and business patrons will use more of the available street parking
 - There will be increased density, allowing for more businesses and residences to be built on less space. This could lead to more noise, traffic, and other issues.
2. We are especially concerned about the disproportionate, negative impact these zoning changes are likely to have on Black and LatinX residents and property owners in Dixwell. Currently, the Dixwell corridor is nearly 90% Black and 5% hispanic, with an estimated median household income of less than \$26,000 a year.

We are worried that these changes will lead to displacement of Black and LatinX residents over time because of:

- the increase of property taxes for homeowners
 - the increase of rent for tenants
 - the increasing cost of living with new businesses we believe are intended to serve non-Dixwell residents
 - the influx of students and new professional renters
 - changes in policing with new residents and clientele from outside the community
3. We believe this rezoning proposal benefits the interests of big development, including Yale University, at the expense of long-time Dixwell residents and property owners.
 4. In addition, the City itself through LCI has been acquiring property in Dixwell and continuously speaks of plans to “revitalize” the Dixwell corridor with new retail and commercial development;
 - **We insist** that any plans to “revitalize” Dixwell must be driven and informed by current Dixwell residents, not City staff or outside consultants
 - **We also insist** that the City reveal all development plans for the Dixwell corridor immediately
 5. We are disheartened that the City, in “piloting” this rezoning in three very different corridors, is effectively pitting residents against each other and against the interests of nonprofit developers whose projects we support.

6. We were engaged late and superficially in this process. We have been provided with last minute or no notice to community meetings and presented with limited, misleading, and incomplete information. The rezoning has progressed to the “final stage” without any genuine community engagement.

If you are as concerned as we are about these changes being proposed in the Dixwell corridor and the lack of community engagement and consent in this process, the draft ordinance for this rezoning will be **going before the City Plan Commission on Wednesday, September 18 at 6:00 PM**. We hope you will join us at City Hall to testify and share your concerns.

We chose to convene today in Scantlebury Park because the recent decision to build a skate park stage here is a clear example of development in Dixwell that ignores the needs and concerns of Dixwell residents.

Dixwell residents have repeatedly asked for basic amenities and refurbishments to park facilities, including benches for parents to use near the splash pad and more trash cans.

Instead of seeking funds to address these issues, the Board of Alders accepted money from the Schwarzman Center at Yale and the Could Be Fund to build a concrete skate board stage that will take away green space from Dixwell families and increase traffic, parking, noise, and safety concerns.

The proposed skate park will have a path connected to the new residential colleges, making it easy for Yale students to access the park. No one is against young people or skateboarding - the insult is the feeling (or knowledge) that because Yale did not want skateboarders at Beinecke Plaza, the Schwarzman Center at Yale donated monies to build the skate park stage outside of Yale campus.

Those of us born and raised here are always being notified of these significant developments in our neighborhood in the 13th hour and never have a say. The “Respect” signs posted around the City apply not only to Yale but also to City officials and departments who should be serving the existing, permanent residents of New Haven and centering our concerns and needs.

We have consistently voiced our opposition at every opportunity we have known about to no avail.

City legislators and officials have provided us with different, contradicting information. It has not been clear where the skate park stage is in the approval process, why it is being installed, how big the concrete structure will be, and when any votes will take place. We have even been told by a City alder that the skate park stage is now a “done deal”.

This is our second call to action: the Friends of Scantlebury Park will be presenting next **Wednesday, September 18 at 5:30 PM** before the Parks Commission on behalf of Dixwell residents who have not been fully engaged or consented to this decision.

We demand transparency in this process **NOW** and moving forward.

It is time for us to come together and build a resident-led plan for development of public and private space in New Haven. We must hold the Board of Alders, the Economic Development Administration, and all of our City departments and officials accountable for creating jobs, businesses, deeply affordable housing, and public spaces that serve the needs of the current, permanent residents of New Haven.

Thank you.