



# Letter To The Editor: Woman Offers Opinions About Housing Issue And Election

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## Letter To The Editor:

My husband and I have been homeowners residing in Alton for decades. I have followed Alton's problems and progress closely, in part because my husband Jim Dodd served for many years as an Alton Alderman, and has continued to serve as a Madison County Board member.

The City of Alton provides more low-income subsidized housing units than the national average and more than its fair share of low-income subsidized housing units compared to other cities within Madison County. That is why I believe the candidates for Mayor must address the issue of the Community of Sunnybrook, a proposed low-income housing project located on Washington Avenue.

Several years ago, Dr. Edward Hightower approached the City of Alton seeking support of a new housing development, known as the Community of Sunnybrook, to be constructed within the city. The original representation was that homes would be owner-occupied, but it was later revealed that the housing units would instead be low-income rent-subsidized housing.

Before Sunnybrook's owners, applied for any permits, they filed suit against the City of Alton, demanding that the City issue building permits to allow the construction of the housing project to begin. After the City began to defend the lawsuit, Sunnybrook's owners finally filed applications for building permits.

Officials of the Building and Zoning Department determined that the housing project could not be developed in the proposed areas off Washington Avenue due to the existing zoning of that area. Upon review of the proposed building plans, city engineers and

independent consultants found numerous code violations and safety concerns. The project could be approved through a request for approval of a new subdivision or through the City's Planned Development Procedures. Either procedure would require a public hearing in which residents would have a chance to present their opinions as to the wisdom of this additional housing project being built in Alton. However, through the lawsuit, Dr. Hightower and Sunnybrook LP have argued that no such public hearing is required.

Mayor Brant Walker has made it clear that he believes no one is above the rules and, along with most of our Alderman and Alderwomen, Alton has resisted Dr. Hightower's attempt to force this proposed housing project on the City without a public hearing through political power and prolonged litigation.

In contrast, David Goins has made increasing the population of Alton one of his primary campaign promises along with increasing "affordable housing." Coincidentally, Dr. Hightower - a resident of Edwardsville and a major supporter of Mr. Goins - stands to personally profit over \$1 million if the proposed housing project is constructed in Alton. Voters deserve to know where David Goins stands on this issue if elected, whether he would force Dr. Hightower to follow the rules and allow people of Alton a public hearing as required by City Code, even if following the code may harm Dr. Hightower's proposed project and his financial windfall.

**- Carol Dodd**

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