

# NEIGHBORHOODS AND SCORES

**Three of the biggest and most valuable kinds of assets our city offers to developers are:**

- Tax Subsidies-- Abatements and TIF benefits
- Public Land
- Zoning changes-- bonus density or other valuable adjustments

**Minimum rubric scores should be required for the use of any of these.**

## NEIGHBORHOODS

The Rubric is designed to raise the bar city-wide, because every neighborhood deserves development that offers real community benefits. All deeply subsidized projects should be able to earn a solid, passing grade. That being said, it is also important to understand that different neighborhoods are in different stages of development, because the private market does not treat them fairly. Cincinnati suffers from deep economic and racial segregation caused by a history of uneven development and discrimination in investment.

**If we believe that the private market has a role to play in the development of a better Cincinnati, then our incentives must be used to make it act more fairly.** This means that we should require the highest Rubric scores in neighborhoods where the market is already going strong. These include our wealthiest areas, and those that are gentrifying quickly. Using the Rubric's current standards, projects in these neighborhoods should score a 75% or higher to earn any of the major public subsidies.

We can set the minimum scores slightly lower for other neighborhoods based on circumstance, but we have to carefully assess changes and transitions on an ongoing basis to make sure the system doesn't end up harming vulnerable communities. So how do we figure this out? We propose using a combination of available city data and the knowledge of local residents.

## STEP 1

### Check patterns of investment.

Apply the following checklist to your neighborhood. Helpful sources of city data include neighborhood breakdowns of: median household income, property value (by type), home ownership rates, racial demographics, and registered businesses.

- Higher housing costs**—for years, rent and home prices in my neighborhood have tended to be higher than in most other city neighborhoods
- High home ownership**—many people in my neighborhood own their homes
- Valuable amenities**—for many years, my neighborhood has had some of the best schools, libraries, parks, and other public spaces in the city
- Majority white/higher wealth**—most of my long-time neighbors are white and middle or upper class
- Business**—there are a variety of businesses in my neighborhood that meet my needs, i.e., I can buy food, clothing, household items, health services, and basic entertainment in my neighborhood

If you can answer yes to most of these, you are likely living in an **area of concentrated wealth and investment**. Because the market is strong where you are, your neighborhood should **raise the bar high, to the 75% mark**, for new projects.



We believe that public land-- whether or not it is sold at market value-- should be reserved for development that contributes to equity in our city. As the market controls private property all around us, this finite resource must be used to bring the kind of investment that the market will not bring on its own. This means that land transferred or sold by the city or the Greater Cincinnati Redevelopment Authority must go to development projects that meet the appropriate minimum scores.

# NEIGHBORHOODS AND SCORES, CONT.

## STEP 2

### Diagnose and resist gentrification.

Apply this next checklist to your neighborhood. Helpful sources of city data include neighborhood breakdowns of: change in property value (by type), change in racial demographics, change in construction permits issued, change in liquor license requests.

- Rise in housing costs**—rent and home prices in my neighborhood have recently gotten much higher
- Significant resident displacement**—neighbors of mine have been getting priced out of the neighborhood
- Surge in development projects**—there's a lot more construction, renovation, or business growth happening in my neighborhood recently
- Influx of amenities serving high-incomes**—there are many new shops, restaurants, and other businesses that are mostly too expensive for my long-time neighbors
- Race/class shift**—most of my long-time neighbors are working class folks and/or people of color, but the new folks moving in are mostly white, and seem to have more money
- Speculation**—real estate businesses are heavily advertising my neighborhood, and people describe it as "revitalized"

If most of these descriptions fit your neighborhood, you're likely in a **hot, gentrifying market**, and you also need to be at **the 75% score level**. More investment is coming, and we need to make sure it doesn't leave vulnerable folks behind. Even if there's lots of low-income affordable housing now, market forces will make it extremely difficult to keep. And new economic opportunities will have to be targeted specifically where they are most needed.

## STEP 3

### Prepare for what's coming.

One more checklist. Helpful sources of city data include those already listed, as well as maps and historic designations.

- More moderate change**—similar changes to the ones described above are happening in my neighborhood, but not quite as dramatically
- Proximity to downtown**—from my neighborhood, you can drive quickly and easily to downtown Cincinnati
- Renter occupancy**—most of my neighbors are renters
- Adjacent investment**—at least one of the neighborhoods that border mine is either quite wealthy or gentrifying quickly
- Historic designation**—my neighborhood is home to a local or national historic district

If your neighborhood is described by some combination in this list, it is **likely starting to transition or in the early stages of gentrification**. We need to watch closely and **have a plan to increase your minimum scores** as change comes.

## STEP 4

### Consider special circumstances.

Your neighborhood might be a special case. Maybe one huge project is on it's way, and you know it's about to change the game for investment and development. In order to lay the groundwork for a healthy community and equitable city future, adjustments to the scoring system may have to be made accordingly.