

## Not in My Back Yard

Dear Citizens of Wayne,

This is a common issue/statement when it comes to zoning/community and regional planning and was the title of a news story from News Channel Nebraska:

<https://northeast.newschannelnebraska.com/story/46287855/not-in-my-backyard-wayne-housing-proposal-raises-eyebrows>

Unfortunately, in a small college town it is hard to avoid. I grew up next to a neglected property that was owed by an absentee landlord on one side and a busy restaurant on the other. Not an ideal place to raise a family but I think we turned out ok. Most of that though was thanks to great parents/family and seeing a community that cared and worked together to solve problems with a few bumps along the way.

Because of the basics I got from growing up in Wayne and the fortunate opportunity to study Architecture and Community and Regional Planning, I frequently used Wayne as a case study or thought about how things could be better and still do. That is why I am so passionate about not putting any more residences closer to the Sewage Treatment Plant. "Not in my back yard" has a whole new meaning when it's sewage. This expensive infrastructure should be isolated and protected, but the city council and planning commission have let us down. I have attended or listened to all public meetings and spoke as much as they would let me, but it didn't matter. They are all an arm of the city which makes it so hard to go against the will of the body.

Thankfully I reached out to the landlords because they have the most to lose and had an association started. They have been a huge help but we are now having many others join our team and get the word out and help get signatures. We are within reach of the required number of signatures and would be done if voters didn't feel pressure not to sign because of where they work or fear of repercussion. This is just sad. I thought we lived in a free society and am asking the Mayor and council to clear that up.

I know that it's risky putting your name on the petition but you're not alone. We have hundreds of signatures but I would like to get over 50% so that our city government hears from the majority of us. I know I have stressed some friendships and, in some cases, I'm biting the hand that feeds me, but I just can't sit back and do nothing when this smelly plant has been an issue for years. Yes, it has gotten much better but still nothing I would want in my back yard. Someone has to protect the future tenants and this taken public space should remain a park or future city building,

Funny thing about that, even the city staff doesn't want to be next to it and have to smell it and yes at the last council retreat they were even looking to buy more land in the area for a city building. I have the recordings. I'm still not sure how I stayed quiet. So why would we want to sell this land off and

put luxury apartments next to that smelly thing? An apartment complex that will most likely be filled with college students and not workforce as we need. Build apartments near the college and I am willing to help all developers find land and get the projects done even ones from out of town! I want this town to grow but in a responsible way by the private sector not by government manipulations. Would they do this to other businesses like say a restaurant, bank, insurance, grocery store, car dealership or any other business and would you want them to?

The other issue I hear that concerns me is the use of the term “slumlord” on some of the people that are helping with the petition. When did being a landlord become a bad thing? Many people in this town have put their blood sweat and tears into these properties, invested in our community, and care more about their tenants than any government official would. Do we have some run-down properties that need a fresh coat of paint and some sprucing up? Yes, but they are not all rentals and tenants need to step up also. I have listened to horror stories on both sides and now being on the Problem Resolution Team (PRT) we are working through the complaints and coming up with a better process that will help our community’s appearance. This is the other reason I approached the landlords; to help them and the city work this out. But one neighbor turning in another is not the way to do it. Hopefully the council will come up with a better solution as we asked for.

I hope this helps explain why I am doing this and not just fighting a project. Lots of moving parts and it’s hard to get them all on paper when I would rather draw or build versus type a letter. Well thanks for listening. More to come but if you have any question please call or text me. I will be at the proposed apartment project site (parking lot on the southwest corner of the soccer fields, on the way to the softball complex) this Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 5-7pm to hopefully get some drive up signatures, then out around town on Saturday.

For more information and/or to sign the remonstrance petition:

1. Call or text me 402-369-0049
2. Send an email to [wayne.rental.association@gmail.com](mailto:wayne.rental.association@gmail.com)
3. Come to the Wayne Fire Hall, 510 Tomar Drive  
Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> – anytime from 8:00am to 6:00pm
4. Visit the Facebook page -- Wayne Property Tax Payers: Wayne Rental Association

Please speak out, sign and help us Grow Wayne Responsibly.

Thanks,

B. J. Woehler