

Brenner, Reynolds Consider Zoning Bill To Address Housing Shortage

A pair of Senate Republicans are contemplating a plan to clarify zoning laws with the potential to have a substantial impact on the state's housing market.

The [Senate Select Committee on Housing](#) has been looking for comprehensive solutions to the housing crisis for the past five months and will soon shift from fact-finding to bill-drafting, Chair [Sen. Michele Reynolds](#) (R-Canal Winchester) previously stated. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, December 26, 2023](#))

Witnesses across the state have outlined the root causes of the crisis and the current state of the market and have also asked for a variety of responses from the state related to transparency, tax credits, infrastructure, investments in local programs, and more.

A common response from [Sen. Andy Brenner](#) (R-Delaware), however, has been to question the potential magnitude of proposed solutions.

For example, in December he pointed out that a request to expand tax credits and incentives would help less than 4,000 people per year, compared to the reported 240,000 deficit in low-to-middle income units.

"That's a pinprick, and we need something that's a lot more comprehensive," he said in an interview.

Brenner expanded on his ideas after a housing committee meeting, during which he told Amy Klaben, president and CEO of Families Flourish, that he was working with Reynolds on "zoning reform regulations to streamline processes because those costs drive up the cost of building a house."

Klaben was one of several witnesses that day to flag inconsistent and unclear zoning laws for both contributing to costs and either slowing or halting development. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, January 25, 2024](#))

Brenner said in the interview that he witnessed that happening during his time as a county recorder and as a member of various zoning and planning boards.

While he is supportive of those bodies' missions, he said it can also result a years-long process of variance requests and referendums to build a new subdivision.

"It drives up costs and what happens is those costs get passed on to the homebuyers and that in turn just drives up the price of housing in general for the whole region," he said.

"I think we need to look at other states like Minnesota and maybe look at comprehensive zoning reform and just building regulation reform."

Brenner said he would not eliminate the right to referendum, but said he wants to nix unnecessary processes that slow down development and add costs.

Brenner was also quick to clarify that he did not want to strip local authority, "but I do want to make it so that everybody knows what the playing field is when they go in."

"If a developer knows what to expect, the process can go more smoothly than it has been," he said.

Brenner anticipates that the bill will take several months to draft, at which point he said he would like to sit down with groups like the Ohio Township Association and the Ohio Municipal League.

"My hope is we could work the kinks out ahead of time before we go introduce it so we can make it easier," he said. "I don't want to take anyone's power away, but we also need to have a situation that's a little more stable for everybody in the long run so we can drive down these costs."