

Cleveland Council approves urban farming, teardown of foreclosed homes

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CLEVELAND -- The City Council on Monday approved two measures aimed at reshaping the city's urban landscape.

One ordinance will allow residents to raise and keep farm animals and bees. It's a step, proponents believe, toward finding innovative uses for vacant land.

The other ordinance sets guidelines for how Mayor Frank Jackson will spend \$25.5 million in federal neighborhood improvements funds. The bulk of the money will be used to tear down abandoned homes left behind by the foreclosure epidemic.

Both were passed after intense debate. The "chicken-and-bees" legislation, as it became nicknamed, generated the most buzz, with several council members objecting to the plan. They cited concerns about noise and other complaints urban farms bring.

Councilwoman Dona Brady, one of three no votes, said she believes the matter is a zoning issue and should not be addressed by blanket legislation. Councilmen Martin Keane and Kevin Kelley also voted against the measure.

Councilman Joe Cimperman, who sponsored the ordinance, said urban farming is a growing trend. He is aware of chickens living in his ward and has compared noise from chickens with noise from motorcycles, insisting that the latter draw more complaints.

"We want people to be able to grow their own food," Cimperman said. The ordinance allows residents to keep chickens, ducks, rabbits and beehives but not roosters, geese or turkeys. A typical residential lot could have no more than six small animals and two hives.

Those wishing to raise and keep animals and bees will have to apply to the city's Health Department for a license. Neighbors would be mailed a notice and could raise objections, Cimperman said.

The ordinance allowing Jackson to begin spending money granted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development passed by a 20-1 vote.

The mayor's original plans for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program called for \$14.5 million to go toward demolitions, with the rest of money going to home rehabilitations and other property improvements.

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