

A Neighborhood Bill of Rights

The Right to Use and Enjoy Your Property: You have the right to improve your home, but you can't violate someone else's rights. Anyone who wants to build has to do it in a way that doesn't abuse their neighbor's property and peace.

The Right to a Safe Neighborhood: Anyone who wants to build must make sure he's not creating an unsafe neighborhood situation.

The Right to Know What's Going On: Nothing can be more disturbing than to have the mystery project going up next door. Construction information must be readily available, and neighbors kept as informed as possible.

The Right to Have Contractors Obey the Law: Birmingham should be consistent and energetic in enforcement, so scofflaws don't trample on the rights of others.

The Right to Know What the Law Is: Builders, owners and neighbors alike need to have easy access to laws, ordinances, policies and interpretations.

The Right to Keep Your Property Undamaged: Improvement of one property never justifies damaging or diminishing the value of another.

The Right Not to Pay the Contractor's Costs: Water, electricity, storage, access are all issues that a builder must solve before construction and on his own property. Utility theft and adjacent property trespass are both illegal.

The Right to Have Public Property Respected: The streets and sidewalks belong to all of us, not the builder.

The Right to Not Pay for Builders Mistakes: Damaged street paving, broken sidewalks, ruined curbs, and gouged outlawns, cut cables and wires; all public property wear and damage should be paid for by the builder, not the citizens.

The Right to Live and Let Live: Builders have rights too, and that "developer" may be a neighbor. You may be adding on yourself in a year or two. Disputes should be mediated before tempers flare and damage becomes intolerable.