

Organization in Illinois helps persons with sexual crime convictions with housing, draws wrath of vigilante neighbors

written by Sandy | June 2, 2022



By Sandy . . . Joliet, Illinois has been making the news lately because several individuals with previous sexual crime convictions are living in an apartment building in a family-oriented neighborhood.

What a shame.

[One source quotes a mother](#) describing her daughter as coming from school “in tears because she was afraid that she was going to be snatched.”

What a shame.

What a shame that persons who have committed crimes and served the sentences for those crimes cannot find housing for themselves, and in some cases their families, because of residency restriction laws that have been shown over and over again to be of no value as a public safety initiative. Even the U.S. Justice Dept. recognizes this, writing in a publication:

“[T]he evidence is fairly clear that residence restrictions are not effective. In fact, the research suggests that residence restrictions may actually increase offender risk by undermining offender stability and the ability of the offender to obtain housing, work, and family support. There

is nothing to suggest this policy should be used at this time.”

https://www.smart.gov/SOMAPI/sec1/ch8_strategies.html (last main section)

However, in spite of the empirical evidence, state after state, Illinois included, have utilized these restrictions, creating a large homeless population, to the point that, in Illinois, [the Chicago Police Dept. issued a policy statement](#) about them.

[The NewDay Apartments](#) are successfully helping to alleviate this situation. Dedicated to making communities safer, they are a private company that builds law-compliant housing for registrants, and it is one of their buildings in Joliet that has become a focal point for the maelstrom that is being created.

The neighborhood is, almost literally, up in arms. It is clear, judging from their statements given to the press and at the community meeting, that their anxiety and their rhetoric is based on myth, misinformation, and media hype. [The local Patch publication](#) saw fit to portray the situation in the most negative manner possible and to print the mug shots, names, and crimes of conviction.

[Joliet's mayor, Bob O'Dekirk](#), in his political posturing to the press, promised to take action against the apartment building, adding more fuel to the fire.

Attorney Adele Nicholas, who is E.D. of NARSOL'S Illinois affiliate Illinois Voices for Reform, was at [the community meeting](#) in Joliet June 1. She reports that some of the community members were respectful, asking questions and expressing concerns in a reasonable fashion. However, what Adele describes as “a few angry, vocal people” were verbally violent, threatening to burn the apartment building, threatening murder and mutilation of the registrants. She was

very disturbed at this, even more disturbed when others in the group cheered those violent threats, and yet more disturbed when not the mayor, nor a city council member, nor any member of law enforcement present, intervened in any way or told them they were inciting breaking the law.

A representative for the NewDay Apartments also expressed concern over the suggestions of illegal violence and vigilantism. He stressed that [NewDay's first and major](#) concern is community safety for everyone. All of their clients are one-time offenders, and he says that, to the best of his memory, not a single one offended against a stranger; every crime was against a relative or someone else he knew, which is true for the vast majority of sexual crime, most especially against children.

What a shame that no media is pointing out the facts about the danger actually posed by registrants living in the community and that children being "snatched" off of the street by someone on the registry is a rare, rare thing.

What a shame that children, hearing the hysteria and fear of their elders, are terrified to play outside.

What a shame that, in a room full of public servants sworn to uphold the law, not a single one spoke out in the face of threats of illegal activities such as violence, arson, and murder.

What a shame that we, as a nation, proclaim that we want people who commit crimes to be rehabilitated and have the opportunities to rebuild their lives and not reoffend and then make laws and take actions that are in direct opposition to what is needed for that to happen.

What a shame.