

Ford's Gin ticketed event at The Josephine strengthens neighborhood campaign's call to halt proposed zoning change

NEW ORLEANS, LA - July 24, 2026 Yard signs reading, "The Josephine: Fix the Problems, Don't Expand Them" are lining Freret neighborhood streets. A new uptown neighborhood campaign, We Like Good Neighbors, raises concerns about a proposed zoning change at The Josephine after the venue exceeded its fire capacity with more than 1,700+ people* in attendance on July 22 for a ticketed Ford's Gin event featuring Eryka Badu.

We Like Good Neighbors is calling on the New Orleans City Council, lobbyist Sherman Strategies, and The Josephine developers Dickie Brennan & Co. and Perle Construction, to halt the proposed zoning change that would allow the venue to expand its current operations to book large-scale ticketed events. The former Our Lady of Lourdes Church at 2400 Napoleon Ave. was renovated and re-opened as The Josephine in fall 2025.

"The July 22, 2026 event is a sign of what the zoning expansion will bring. The developers have not been good neighbors and we need them to fix the problems they have already created before even thinking about expanding" said community organizer, barber, and neighbor Stan Norwood. The ticketed event hosted by Ford's Gin drew 1,700+ people, well over the venue's fire code capacity of 1,341. Neighbors are questioning how this event was allowed and which city departments are responsible for enforcing zoning violations of this magnitude and scale.

We Like Good Neighbors formed over concerns of parking and traffic problems, zoning violations, and a lack of community benefit tied to The Josephine, developed by Dickie Brennan & Co., in partnership with the Fuselier family of Perle Construction and other prominent investors. The venue's current permit allows for weddings, galas, corporate functions, and non-profit ticketed events. The developers filed permits in December 2025 to expand operations to include ticketed, late-night entertainment events, persisting with the planned expansion despite widespread neighborhood opposition and a City Planning Commission (CPC) denial.

Neighbors first challenged the expansion at two CPC meetings on March 10 and 24 at which the CPC recommended an "effective denial for lack of legal majority," and were unable to secure a second motion to approve the ordinance change. Commissioners cited concerns over increased parking and traffic congestion and the scale of event crowds. CPC Chair Katy Witry said, "I understand the impact and the traffic. It is going to be tough for all of the surrounding neighbors. I live close to a venue. I have seen the changes that have happened because of that."

Neighbors say they were blindsided at the May 21 Council meeting in which District B Councilmember Lesli Harris moved to approve the live entertainment ordinance change with proposed provisos - stipulations to the original permit request - that were not shared with them in advance, despite ongoing discussions with Sherman Strategies and the developers. For a full list of provisos, [read here](#). Joel Carranza, a neighbor who has taken part in a number of meetings held on the issue, said, "The developers of The Josephine have continuously brushed aside the concerns of the community. They have said, 'We don't want to be like Tipitinas,' and

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dismissed concerns about capacity. Everything about [the Ford's Gin event] contradicted what they have said publicly."

After months of requests, roughly 35 neighbors secured a meeting with Councilmember Harris, District B staff, and city department staff on June 29. Neighbors wore matching yellow shirts, with a logo, "Fix The Problems, Don't Expand Them", and described existing zoning violations related to trash and outdoor music, traffic flow problems, illegal and lack of parking (the venue has 56 spots at a lot 3 blocks away), and drunk driving among event-goers.

Harris provided contact information for the City's Nighttime Economy, Permits and Zoning, and Parking Enforcement offices, and promised a traffic study once local schools and colleges reopen for the fall semester. However, Toi Jean Carter, a neighbor and one of the campaign's organizers, expressed frustrations. "After-hours calls to city offices go unanswered and a traffic study will be of no use if it is conducted after the Council votes on the ordinance change," said Carter. "The July 22 event reinforces my neighbors' concerns and deepens our mistrust with Dickie Brennan & Co., Sherman Strategies, and Perle Construction."

With a Council vote slated as soon as August 6, We Like Good Neighbors is calling for council to halt the ordinance change to give neighbors, city departments, and developers time to complete a comprehensive traffic study and negotiate enforceable mitigation measures for the existing operations.

About Us

We Like Good Neighbors formed after five months of organizing and meetings among Freret neighborhood residents regarding The Josephine's expansion. The campaign includes neighbors represented by three different neighborhood associations, whose boundaries all meet at the intersection of Freret St. and Napoleon Ave. Our goal is to show up for each other and demand accountability from developers, elected and appointed officials, and city staff who coordinate development initiatives. We believe the people who live in a neighborhood should have a say in what happens to it.

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*1700 people was the number shared by a Brennan's employee the morning of July 23rd. He elaborated that they expected 900 people.

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