

Daily Times Friday, April 25, 2025

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PILAP challenges controversial land-use changes by SBCA

In a significant move to protect residential areas, the Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (PILAP), together with Shehri-CBE and the Urban Resource Centre (URC), has filed a public interest petition in the Sindh High Court against the Sindh Building Control Authority's (SBCA) 2025 land-use amendment. The amendment controversially redefines "residential use" to permit cafes, restaurants, and recreational spaces within residential areas, with no public consultation required. The petition contends that SBCA's amendment removes vital protections for residents by stripping away the long-standing process that allowed for public objections to zoning changes. By allowing commercial activity in peaceful neighbourhoods without prior notice or input from those affected, the amendment risks undermining the right to privacy, clean air, and a safe living environment.

This legal challenge comes at a time when Karachi's urban planning is facing mounting criticism for a lack of transparency and accountability. Citizens have long raised concerns about the commercialisation of residential spaces, leading to increased noise, traffic congestion, pollution, and a breakdown of community life. The amendment is seen as part of a worrying trend that prioritises private profits over public welfare and participatory governance. PILAP and its partners are urging authorities to protect citizens' constitutional rights and to ensure that zoning laws are applied fairly and transparently. They call for greater public involvement in planning decisions and reaffirm their commitment to preserving Karachi's liveability for future generations. The case now awaits hearings in the Sindh High Court. PR