

SBCA amendment allowing commercial use of residential property challenged in SHC

PILAP, Shehri CBE and URC say in petition amendment risks undermining right to privacy, clean air and safe living environment

By our correspondent

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 petitioners submitted that the 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 liv-

ing 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 others urged 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.

Earlier this month, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Pasban Democratic Party (PDP)

challenged the recent amendments to the Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations 2002 with regard to commercial use of residential and amenity properties in the city.

Filing petitions with the Sindh High Court, the JI's leader of the opposition in the City Council Saifuddin and PDP Chairman Altaf Shakoor submitted that the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) had issued a

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notification amending the Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations. They said the amendments would violate the basic rights of citizens and open a flush gate of commercialisation of residential areas.