

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS TO ZONING COMMISSIONERS

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From: Wilson, Larry T [larry-wilson@uiowa.edu]
Sent: Saturday, July 17, 2010 10:42 AM
To: Pat Bauer; wallu@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wkrkar@aol.com; wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Comments About the Maxwell Development Rezoning
Attachments: UHZoningCommissionLTWCommentsatZoningMeeting 07-15-10.docx

Dear commission members--

As you know, I presented some comments at last Thursday's Zoning Commission meeting. Chair, Pat Bauer, had indicated at the meeting that if there were any written comments they should be submitted to him and the other commission members. Attached are the comments I made last Thursday in writing for your consideration. At the end, are comments about TIF financing that I did not state at the meeting because it didn't seem to be the focus of the meeting and we were also running out of time.

I would be open to discussing any of my comments with you by e-mail, phone or in person if you wish.

Thanks.

Larry

LARRY WILSON COMMENTS

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS ZONING COMMISSION MEETING JULY 15

I believe it is inevitable that the St Andrew Church site will eventually be redeveloped, so it is not a matter of if developed, but how. My wife Mary and I live across Melrose from the development so we will be directly affected by it.

The development plan now being considered is substantially the same as submitted earlier. The height of the high-rise remains the same at 76ft, but the front mixed-use building has been reduced by 16 ft from 54 ft to 38ft., and is set back from Melrose an additional 10ft to a total of 33ft.

Reducing the height of the mixed use building and setting it back farther from Melrose is a step in the right direction, but overall it is not enough.

I therefore looked at what type of development I think would reasonably fit into the adjacent single-family residential areas rather than how much development could be fit on the site

I believe that the existing Grand View Court development reasonably fits into its adjacent single-family neighborhood and should serve as a model for an acceptable planned unit development at the church site.

The Bauer alternative proposal of a 4-story high-rise and 2-story front building would reduce the massing and height of the buildings and density of the development to that similar to Grand View Court. While it would still have a considerably greater density than allowed in R-1, I think it would be reduced to an acceptable level.

The Bauer proposal, which does not include commercial uses, would create a significant new tax base and would also allow:

- Greatly reduced required parking because the UH ordinances require a much greater amount of parking for commercial development.
- Most of the needed parking could then be provided in the proposed parking under the buildings thereby allowing replacement of surface parking with an open/recreation area. About 93 parking spaces would be eliminated and the access traffic reduced by about 2/3rds
- It potentially could reduce the traffic accessing the site to a level that could be served by the proposed Melrose entrance only.
- Potentially, the proposed entrance from Sunset could be eliminated or at least reduced to emergency access only.
- The JCCOG staff report stated that it would be beneficial to realign the north leg of Sunset to be at more of a right angle to Melrose. But if the amount of development traffic using the road is reduced, as the Bauer Plan indicates, I believe it would be acceptable to leave the intersection as it is and as it has been for many years.
- Leaving the intersection as is would greatly reduce the impact on single-family residences on Sunset and would eliminate the reason given for filling in the ravine immediately adjacent to the existing roadway.
- Not filling the ravine would allow preserving the existing planting which would provide a very good screen and buffer for the houses east of the development. A bridge could be built across the ravine rather than filling it if access to Sunset is absolutely needed.
- The JCCOG report also stated that UH cannot restrict the specific use within the commercial zone--any use allowed in the UH commercial zone, such as restaurants, cafes, taverns, and similar establishments, would be allowed, but it does not allow many of the uses such as bakeries, drug stores, and beauty/barber shops that UH residents say they want.

- Eliminating the commercial zone will also greatly reduce truck access to the site and the accompanying noise and fumes

The JCOG report recommended that light fixtures be shielded from the neighbors, but didn't address the shielding of car lights into the Birkdale condos, particularly during the winter when the leaves have fallen.

In looking at contour maps and the east side ravine on-site, I believe the ravine will fall into the protective slope category of 40% slope or more as indicated in the UH sensitive areas ordinance and, according to the ordinance, should be protected and not be filled or graded. This should be verified by an expert before accepting a plan that relies on filling the ravine.

TIF FINANCING COMMENTS NOT PRESENTED AT THE MEETING

TIF is being touted as a partnership between developer and City, which on the surface could be beneficial. But the way it was framed last Tuesday night, it would be heading in the direction of a subsidy for infrastructure improvements created by the development of high-end commercial/ condos for the benefit of a private developer. That is not the intended application of TIF.

If the location and desirability of the development are as great as the developer claims, the development should have no difficulty in paying for costs created by the development. Otherwise, in that scenario, it would actually be a developer subsidy that would translate into greater profit for the developer rather than provide additional community benefit above that which would occur anyway.

A more appropriate partnership, in my view, is where the UH would get non-development created community benefits/improvements such as by replacing an already deteriorating infrastructure (which I don't think is the case here--but if so, the developer would pay for any increased capacities created by the development), or by building the bridge over the ravine rather than filling it, or by providing long-term use of a UH office/government meeting space in the commercial area with street visibility, etc.

In short, the TIF should only cover community benefit improvements that would not otherwise occur and which would merit offsetting receiving the tax income from some specified amount of development for the 15 or so years that seemed to be the time frame indicated in last Tuesday night's presentation.

The area developments shown last Tuesday night as having received TIF financing, were for projects that the City (Iowa City or Coralville) could not make happen otherwise. For instance, Iowa City wanted to redevelop the Plaza Towers area and redevelop Pepperwood Plaza, but could not get a developer to do so in the way they wanted without TIF. For the Coralville River Landing project, the TIF was applied to a development plan actually prepared by the City and the City wanted it implemented according to their plan and time frame. While I am not specifically familiar with the Graham Packaging Plant project, TIF is typically applied to that type of development to get them to locate locally rather than in another city and to also provide jobs. The number of jobs to be created is often written into the agreement. The McGladrey & Pullen presenter said he agreed with these interpretations.

From: Mary Mathew Wilson [mmwinc@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 8:46 AM
To: pbb338koser@aol.com; wallu@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wkrkar@aol.com; wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Feedback on St. Andrew development plans

Dear Members of the University Heights Zoning Commission,

I write to urge you to recommend to the University Heights City Council at their August 10th meeting to approve the Bauer Alternative rezoning petition. The size and scale of the Bauer plan is an acceptable fit with the residential area that surrounds the St. Andrew property and would have a much less negative impact than the Maxwell plan on the immediate neighborhood and the overall environment, including the environmentally-sensitive area in the wooded ravine on the east side of the property to be developed.

It is apparent to many residents of University Heights, including myself, that there is not even a remote community need for a commercial space as part of the development and, thankfully, the Bauer plan does not include one. Adopting the Bauer plan would allow for the placement an attractive and buffereing green space around the development since there would be no need for additional required parking space to accommodate a commercial portion of the development. There would also be no need to completely re-engineer and reconstruct North Sunset Street so it can be left undisturbed.

I hope you will consider all of these factors--the look and feel of our community, the quality of life of residents in the immediate neighborhood adjacent to the proposed development site, the desirability for additional community green space, the absence of any need whatsoever by the community for a commercial space, the health and well-being of a pristine, environmentally-sensitive area protected by our comprehensive plan being the ravine on the east edge of the development site, and the common-sense solution of leaving Sunset Street as it currently exists (if it ain't broke; don't fix it).

I appreciate your attention to this letter and your consideration of my input and opinion on this matter. I hope you believe, as I do, that the voices of your constituency matter and that it is incumbent on you to take them into consideration when arriving at a recommendation for the council. Your decision, if the council accepts and acts on your recommendation, will affect the community for years to come, so I urge you to put personal agendas aside and think about the highest good of the community that relies on your sound, unbiased judgment.

Please contact me at 339-0976 or by return email if you would like additional comments.
Thank you.

From: June Braverman [bravejune@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 11:35 AM
To: pbb338Koser@aol.com; wall6@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wkrkar@aol.com;
wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Bauer plan

To the members of the UHeights Zoning Commission:

I hope you will endorse the Bauer plan at your meeting this week sending it on to the UHeights Council for consideration in August. I support this plan for its size and scale and lack of commercial usage along with the traffic and parking demands it would entail. The plan is clear and thoughtful and deserves your attention and votes.

June Braverman
349 Koser Ave.

From: Nancy Barnes [nbarnes.kohout@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 12:02 PM
To: pbb338koser@aol.com; wallu@aol.com; cathlane@gmail.com; wkr@aol.com;
wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Bauer plan is the right one

Dear Zoning Board Members,

I live at 300 Golfview avenue, an easy walk to the St. Andrews Church site, close enough to it to be extremely concerned about the scope of Jeff Maxwell's plan for the site. I believe that the Bauer plan is far superior to the Maxwell plan, for the Maxwell plan would have many negative effects on the community and on the natural environment in our area. The Bauer plan is much more compatible with our neighborhoods. It is not huge and intrusive, which Maxwell's is, it would not bring us as much additional traffic on our streets, and it is respectful of the people of our community as well as of the sensitive natural life in the ravine which would be destroyed by Mr. Maxwell.

We do need some development in University Heights, and the Bauer plan is the kind of development we need. The Maxwell plan is not. Please give your support to the Bauer plan, not Maxwell's.

Sincerely,

Nancy Barnes-Kohout

From: MSvare0228@aol.com
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 2:28 PM
To: pbb338koser@aol.com; wallu@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wallacegay@mchsi.com; wkrkar@aol.com
Subject: St. Andrew's property

Dear Members of the U Heights Zoning Commission,

I am writing to let you know I am in favor of the Bauer plan for the development of the St. Andrew's property. It would preserve the quality of our community and keep the traffic flow on Melrose manageable. The Maxwell plan would greatly increase traffic and noise with the commercial property and change the community over all.

Sincerely,

Marlys Svare
228 Marietta Avenue

From: Wilson, Larry T [larry-wilson@uiowa.edu]
Sent: Monday, July 19, 2010 2:43 PM
To: Pat Bauer; wallu@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wkrkar@aol.com; wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Comments About the Maxwell Development and Bauer Alternative Development

Dear Commissioners--

I have been asked by a commission member to clarify my position on the Maxwell development proposal and the Bauer development alternative. I definitely believe that the Maxwell proposal as currently submitted is too dense, has a building mass too great and a large surface parking lot for the development to fit into the character of the neighborhood. I therefore gave a lot of thought as to what I think would reasonably fit into the neighborhood and would reasonably respect the adjacent single-family developments as opposed to how much development could be built on the site.

I firmly believe that the Bauer 4-story high-rise and 2-story front building, which by eliminating commercial development, would also reduce the required parking to the degree that almost all of the surface parking could be eliminated, is a reasonable development alternative. It would then be similar to the Grandview Court development in building height, visual impact on the neighborhood character and traffic impact caused by the development. In short, I think the Bauer alternative plan is a reasonable development proposal and I further think it would bridge the difference in the polarized community development positions and bring our community back together.

Thanks.

Larry

From: ruppertdm@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, July 20, 2010 1:05 PM
To: pbb338koser@aol.com; wallu@aol.com; cathlane07@gmail.com; wkrkar@aol.com; wallacegay@mchsi.com
Subject: Zoning for development of Saint Andrew property

University Heights Zoning Commission Members

We support the Bauer plan because it is more in keeping with the standards that we have come to expect of University Heights living. All of the current positive aspects of living in University Heights have been well stated by many of our citizens on numerous occasions and hopefully will not be overlooked by the members of the commission.

We hope the members can appreciate our concerns about having commercial development and all the problems that we believe are evident. Those of us who live within 200 feet of such a development are particularly concerned as would other citizens if they lived in our area. Reduction in property value is another great concern. Our property is directly across from the existing entrance to Saint Andrew Church.

In addition to the many favorable aspects of the Bauer plan, it offers more appealing green space, maintains the east ravine, supports less traffic, less noise and in general less disruption to an already desirable community.

We believe that the identified tax revenue of the Bauer plan will be more than adequate to meet the needs of University Heights.

We urge the commission to consider our thoughts along with those of many others who favor the Bauer plan and vote to show your support of the citizenry.

Sincerely submitted,

Robert and Della Ruppert
314 Koser Avenue

Phone: 338-4811

From: Belgium, Katherine G [katherine-belgium@uiowa.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, July 21, 2010 1:06 PM
To: Mary Mathew Wilson; adudler@gmail.com; bravejune@gmail.com; brennanmcg@gmail.com; bstehbens@hotmail.com; cluzzie@aol.com; Moore, Daniel; Timmerman, Derek J (UI Health Care); dpedersen63@gmail.com; Prickman, Gregory J; hopsonjr@aol.com; HopsonRC@aol.com; jaleff@mchsi.com; jeff@icrealestate.com; Bowers, Laura; Fritts, Lawrence N; linddick@aol.com; lkparko@yahoo.com; lwilson308@yahoo.com; msvare0228@aol.com; Barnes, Nancy J; pbb338koser@aol.com; Stewart, Rachel A; richschmidtia@msn.com; Tracy, Roger; ruppertdm@aol.com; russcl802@aol.com; russcl802268@yahoo.com; wallu@aol.com; zanguelov@gmail.com; al leff; Alice Haugen; irene bowers; Jerry Zimmermann; Mathew Wilson, Mary E; Myra Davis; Rachel
Subject: RE: Feedback on St. Andrew development plans

Members of the Zoning Commission: Please know that I agree totally with Mary Wilson's letter concerning the rezoning request for development of the St. Andrew property. The points she makes about 1) not needing the commercial development; 2. keeping the green space - especially the ravine, 3. limiting the parking spaces since there would not be the need without the commercial establishments - which has the added positive factor of lessening the traffic on Melrose (Pat's figures on this were completely convincing), 4. eliminating the need to do anything with the corner of Melrose and Sunset, 5. maintaining a pseudo residential atmosphere to the area AND STILL raising enough tax base to take care of University Heights' needs for many years to come are most realistic. This is a compromise that could restore friendship within the community. You have the ability to move University Heights forward in a progressive and positive. direction. Thank you for your efforts.
Kathie Belgium