

Main Gate Development,

excerpt from Councilman's Kozachik's Ward 6 Newsletter

Since mid-last year we have been in a design process with multiple stakeholders related to how to develop the Main Gate District – generally from Speedway to 6th, and from Euclid to Park. Included in those talks were members of the West University Neighborhood, developers and other owners of private property located in that area, the University and other interested taxpayers. On May 8th, the M&C gave direction to the Zoning Examiner to hold some final public hearings and return to us with a proposed amendment outlining design standards for the area. Our specific direction was to cap heights on the Tyndall sites at 90', 84' and 56'. Nobody who had participated in the months' long process got everything they wanted. But those who had been engaged in that process trusted that their input had been heard, and at least given consideration in the deliberative process that drove us to that May 8th direction to staff.

On Tuesday we were to adopt final language. There were some changes proposed by the Zoning Examiner (ZE), essentially adding some review options, and allowing for the possibility of increasing heights above those we had unanimously approved in the 8th. Nothing in the set of facts had changed between our vote on the 8th and Tuesday. Some of us found it odd that more changes to our clear direction were being proposed.

What was even more odd was that speaker after speaker during the public hearing on Tuesday kept referring to a "130'" compromise that they were willing to adopt. That was not a part of any of the ZE hearings, but it had clearly been discussed and agreed upon before the meeting on Tuesday.

A motion to adopt the 130' was made, and it was seconded – both by council members whose wards are geographically farthest from the Main Gate area, and both by council members who have neither been to any of the scoping meetings, nor have any of their staff members been involved at any public level. The operative word there is 'public.'

Draw your own conclusions, but Wards 1, 3 and 6 are most directly involved in the issue due to the proximity of our constituents, Wards 1, 3 and 6 have been involved with the scoping and public hearing process, and Wards 1, 3 and 6 were left out of any discussion of a 'compromise' – and the vote went in favor of that compromise on a 4-3 count. Wards 2, 4, 5, and the Mayor voted for the "compromise".

The issue is not 130'. The issue is the credibility of the process by which we invite public participation, we spend countless hours in meetings, hire a facilitator, gather input and come to a final resolution – and find out that a deal had been cut outside of the light of day by people who had no part in any of that process, have no direct stake in the fallout from the design standards, and yet found a way to ignore the broader message this sort of *closed door* deal sends to the community.

The 130' standard will not be the end of the world for the people who spent their time in the design discussions. It will most certainly result in a continued deterioration in the credibility of the M&C and our ability to get citizens to participate in public processes, boards, committees and commissions. The 'deal' was short sighted and an insult to those of us who have invested our time in reaching a conclusion that didn't give anybody all of what they wanted, but it was reached in a way that you could go back and read transcripts of the meetings and know that what we proposed had at least been a topic of public discussion. That cannot be said of the 'compromise.'