

From: Stacey Simpson Duke [<mailto:staceyduke@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2011 1:43 PM
To: Rampson, Wendy; tderenzinski@a2gov.org
Subject: The Varsity project

Dear Ms. Rampson and Mr. Derenzinski,

I am writing to express my hopes that The Varsity project, planned for 425 East Washington, will be permitted to proceed with the gracious courtyard as planned and presented at the Citizens Participation meeting last July.

The local architect for this project, Brad Moore, has been meeting with me since May, in order to include our church (at 517 East Washington) in the conversation as this project was being planned. I have found him and the developers to have been unusually solicitous of our concerns and needs in this process, and they have worked hard to make this project have as little negative impact on our property as possible. A significant part of that effort was directed at the design of a gracious courtyard at the East Washington entrance. This courtyard would have the effect of transitioning the architecture on East Washington, from the historic end - the two churches - to the high-rise residential end, in a visually pleasing way. The courtyard would be aesthetically much more in line with our own entryway than would the proposed alternative - the design as it will be built if the developer ends up going with the "by right" option.

I was horrified to learn late last week that the "by right" option is now a possibility. I have seen the renderings of what the construction will look like if it goes forward as a "by right" and, in comparison to the proposed courtyard, it is quite imposing - a jarring shift from the look of our own property. I, along with the Chair of our Board of Trustees, have worked hard to communicate with our membership the positive aspects of having The Varsity next door to us. I believe our membership will feel quite differently once they see the renderings of the "by right" option.

Our congregation has been in this location for 130 years. We are committed to the good of this neighborhood and are hopeful for the long-term vitality of our area. While we would not necessarily have chosen for a high-rise to go up right next to us, we are grateful for how the developer and architects have included us in this process, and we want this to be the best project possible. The courtyard seems an essential part of that.

I am not well-versed in city zoning ordinances, but I have the impression that your commission does have the latitude to help make this project happen in a way that is acceptable to the city, the developers, and the neighbors. I do hope you will do what you have the power to do to make this project the best it can be. I am very hopeful that it will remain a "planned project" with the gracious courtyard.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I would welcome further conversation if you have any questions or concerns about what I've written.

Best,
Stacey Simpson Duke

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