

Wilberg Community Planning LLC

February 8, 2008

Patricia T. Najera, Chair
Michal Dawson, Vice-Chair
Stephanie Bloomingdale
Larri Sue Jacquart
Gaurie Rodman
J. Allen Stokes:

Dear City Plan Commissioners:

I am a member of the Board of Directors of Our Space, Inc. Unfortunately, a prior business commitment prevents me from attending the February 11, 2008, public hearing concerning the rezoning request to allow construction of Empowerment Village at 6th St. and Rosedale Ave.

When I attended a community meeting convened by Ald. Zielinski on December 11, 2007, I was impressed by the kindness of neighborhood residents and their general support for the project. While there were questions regarding the coordination of the project's development with neighborhood efforts to reclaim the riverfront, there were no insurmountable barriers presented. Empowerment Village developers (Cardinal Capital and Our Space, Inc.) have done everything possible to reshape the project to address environmental concerns and, in fact, to bring their support to riverfront and bike path initiatives. In these efforts, the developers demonstrated a willingness to adjust plans to complement and support important community priorities relative to the river. For whatever reason, however, environmental advocates have opted against collaboration, choosing instead the all too familiar "Not in My Backyard" approach to community problem-solving.

Cardinal Capital and Our Space, Inc. have created a project design that is sound, appropriate to the site, and responsive to community needs. They are committed to being good neighbors and supporting environmental improvement efforts *over the long term*. As importantly, they are committed to creating genuine permanent housing opportunities for people with mental illness.

I may be naïve but I wonder how one parochial interest can trump a major community need. I wonder why leadership, including the Plan Commission, doesn't spend more time insisting that competing interests find a compromise (which is completely and entirely possible in this instance). I wonder why land that is currently vacant, ill-kept, and inaccessible is better kept that way rather than being developed into a tax-generating entity. I also wonder how long we let the NIMBY syndrome be disguised as prettier, more politically correct concerns, e.g. environmentalism. Compromise and co-existence is possible here but they can't happen without leadership. The Plan Commission would be a good place to start.

Sincerely,

Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.

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