

“One Park” Clears Committee

The rezoning and alley closure for the “One Park” project at Lexington and Grinstead was approved 6-0 by Metro Council’s Planning and Zoning Committee on Tuesday and will be voted on next week by the full Metro Council. After carefully studying the record, I will be voting to approve the rezoning.

At Tuesday’s meeting, I announced several reasons for that vote.

First, the site is severely underused and unattractive. Almost no one says it’s best to leave it as is, and maintaining the current C-2 zoning, with its many unwanted possibilities, is not in the best interest of the community.

Second, higher density, mixed-use zoning promotes lively neighborhoods with great amenities. It should be encouraged at sites like this, in urban edge locations. Low density zoning results in sprawl and adverse environmental effects. Keeping things as close to the same as possible should not be our goal in the community.

While not dispositive for me, I was glad to see some residential units reserved for people whose income is less than the area median. My proposal to strengthen those requirements was approved by the committee. That should be a model for the community going forward.

Finally, while I share concerns about adverse effects on traffic, I have carefully listened and heard no real, persuasive rebuttal to the traffic study in the record. I also know that the study was extensively reviewed by Louisville Metro staff, which did not find it to be flawed. Simply saying that traffic will be unacceptable reminds me of the numerous concerns I heard about the planned recent road reconfiguration on Lexington Road between Payne and Grinstead, which turned out to be unfounded.

The process for this rezoning has been deeply flawed. As the Planning Commission Chair has stated, the original three-tower design was never going to be built. There is simply no benefit in advancing that kind of proposal. The harm to the public, including twelve “charettes” that were non-collaborative and in which private citizens were disrespected, was significant.

Attempts to influence the process, by Greater Louisville, Inc. after the record was closed, and by the developer’s attorney to me after the case had been filed but before a public hearing, were inappropriate and unhelpful. They did not influence my position but they do undermine public confidence. In my view, it’s wrong for an elected official to encourage the public to participate in a public process, state that decisions will be made on the record of that process and then meet in secret with a developer’s attorney who is trying to get the official’s “basic take” on a proposal and to learn whether the elected official is “enticed” by it”. I refused to have that meeting and I immediately shared the request with the County Attorney.

We all deserve a better, more collaborative, more transparent zoning process, and I hope we will see it in the future.