

## Grove Place Association Special Meeting – January 7, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm at our usual meeting room at the Metro YMCA by Vice President Bob Keck. As there were 30 members present, we did not have a quorum (40), so tonight's meeting was to discuss nearby development issues and gain a sense of how Grove Place residents feel about these projects. City Council representative Michael Patterson attended. Bob Keck reminded all that our role was to comment on design and not to get derailed by questions on finances or operations. This is because zoning in the Center City District (CCD) is design based and there are very few restrictions on the use of a property in the CCD. If a property in the CCD generally meets the design guidelines, then the city would generally have to approve it. There is nothing that would allow the city to consider economic feasibility of a project when reviewing it. If a project falls significantly outside design guidelines then there is a review process required. This process does not involve any public meetings, although the public can submit input to the zoning department.

Michael Weed, presented a proposal by Richmond Street LLC to legalize and improve an existing parking lot at 185 University Avenue – directly across the street from School of Inquiry #58, at the southeast corner of Scio and University. The intent at this time is to hold the lot for future development by others while operating it as an unmanned parking lot with a box payment mechanism. It was confirmed that lighting would comply with "dark sky" requirements. Neighborhood concerns included security of overnight parking vehicles and the site being designed to deter illicit activity. Member Chris Kowalsky (Downstairs Cabaret) expressed concern over the owner's earlier work on site and the city's stop work order. He also predicted that the operation of this parking area would adversely impact DCT's parking revenue that it relies on for operations. The general consensus, without a vote being taken, was that GPA would not take a position.

Dan Dwyer, property owner, and Jeff Ashline, of Mossien Associates Architects, presented revised plans to construct an apartment building at the site of the closed restaurant at 58 University Avenue on the northwest corner of Gibbs and University. The number of apartments has been reduced from 29 to 18, of which 12 will be approximately 1450 sq. ft. 2 BR units, and the remaining 6 will be 550 sq. ft. single bedroom units. The apartments will be on floors 2-5 with a 12-space car park on the ground floor. A portion of the 5<sup>th</sup> story façade was to be eliminated. Dwyer presented photos of other neighborhood and University Ave. structures that were equal to or exceed the height of the proposed development.

The Center City District-Grove Place (CCD-G) design guidelines recommend a maximum height of three stories, and the consensus of the group was that the developer had not adequately addressed this key issue. There are concerns about the building's design and if it is compatible with the existing neighborhood with input offered that the design should echo some of the Macon inspired design in the neighborhood. Also, there is a 4,000 volt electric line that goes along the rear of the existing building, and it does not appear that a solution has been reached with RG&E. Participants voiced a strong preference for requiring buried utilities.

Dwyer was asked for, and agreed to create, a rendering of the newest iteration looking north on Gibbs St. facing the building.

The conundrum is how to produce a commercially viable plan that works within the design criteria that Grove Place residents have spent so much time and effort to create and defend. Many residents expressed their desire to be certain that our association is committed to relying on those guidelines as we review this development and future development. Some expressed concern that the City is not aware that Grove Place residents do not support the project as it now exists. This may have been triggered by Dwyer's architect stating in his cover letter to the city that there had been meetings with the Grove Place Association and that our organization was supportive of the development. It also appears that the PRC may have been unaware that the property was in the CCD-G design district and so was unaware of the applicable design guidelines. At least one in attendance heard Dwyer say, "I'm going to do what I want." Michael Patterson held a conversation asking those in attendance what, if anything, could be changed that would make this development acceptable to the group. Height and scale continue to be the greatest challenges.

A vote of residents present was taken on a resolution (attached) to ask that the city not grant relief from the Center City District-Grove Place design guidelines for this project. It received unanimous support with two abstentions. President Kim Russell abstained and did not participate in the discussion as her employer, Home Leasing, has been asked to bid on the construction for the project.

Grove Place leaders were asked to consider holding conversations with city representatives to work towards improved communication and better process for reviews.

Suzanne Mayer reminded all of the C4- Center City Community Coalition's Skate, Play and ROC the Riverway event scheduled for Wednesday January 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 at 3 City Center across from Washington Square Park.

Suzanne also briefly introduced a NFP initiative to guide discussion on future Inner Loop development. As we were already well over the projected time of the meeting, it was agreed that this would be a featured topic at our next meeting, Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup>. What is happening with future Inner Loop development continues to be of great concern to our members.

GPA will push out to members a proposal to have the city hold a parcel at 62-62 Scio Street from development in order to have it included in future arts/music and pedestrian plans for the city. Email support/comments to President Kim Russell will be encouraged.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Carlos Mercado, Secretary  
Resolution attached.