

From: Margaret Leary [<mailto:mleary@umich.edu>]
Sent: Saturday, March 01, 2014 12:19 PM
To: Planning
Subject: Fwd: Urban park proposal on Mar. 3 agenda

Dear Planning Commissioners,

RE: PROPOSAL FOR URBAN PARK ON 5th AVENUE

Below is an email I sent to council. I served on Planning Commission for about a decade, and the concept behind the Urban Park Resolution on Council's March 3 agenda is obviously not about a park; it's about stopping development on the most valuable piece of property the city owns.

If nothing else, such a drastic step should have gone through CPC and city planning FIRST, not after designation as a park.

Thanks for all your good work--I know how tough it is!

Best,
Margaret

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Margaret Leary <mleary@umich.edu>
Date: Sat, Mar 1, 2014 at 12:10 PM
Subject: Urban park proposal on Mar. 3 agenda
To: "Warpehoski, Chuck" <CWarpehoski@a2gov.org>, Sbriere@a2gov.org, SKailasapthy@a2gov.org, JLumm@a2gov.org, Spetersen@a2gov.org, "Kunselman, Stephen" <skunselman@a2gov.org>, CTaylor@a2gov.org, JEaton@a2gov.org, MTeall@a2gov.org, Manglin@a2gov.org, John Hieftje <jhieftje@umich.edu>

Dear Mayor Hieftje and Council Members:

This resolution is not about a park.

It's about stopping any further development of this site.

It is the most recent of a series of attempts over the years to block any development of this site, in spite of a decade of planning that has determined the best use of the site is D1 with a small public space that could be maintained by surrounding businesses.

This resolution would waste our tax dollars (by planning for, creating and maintaining an elaborate park); and throw away the chance for any return on investment that a tax-generating development would provide. We've made a huge investment in the parking structure, Library Lane, and other infrastructure improvements; and changes in zoning, to make D1 possible.

You just spent a long time considering whether to buy the Edwards Bros site to keep it on the tax rolls. This resolution proposes to remove even more valuable property from the tax rolls by making it a park. We need to know a) how much would developing and maintaining the park cost; and b) how much tax revenue will be permanently lost by rendering the remaining land unusable?

My concerns extend beyond such a deliberate waste of our tax dollars.

In brief:

1. This resolution would result in a permanent loss of potential tax revenue and make it almost

impossible to attract a developer. It may make the remaining space legally impossible to develop (no public street).

2. The concept is fundamentally flawed. The park should not be built until there is density to support it, i.e. thriving businesses willing to pay for it.

3. Spending money on such a huge park is morally wrong given the need for indoor places for people who need shelter.

4. This is going too fast for such a serious and complex proposal. A minority is pushing it in spite of PAC's careful thoughtful process, to say nothing of the long and careful public processes over the last six years, which all concluded there should be a 5000 sq ft public space, and D1 development on the rest.

Before asking any city or DDA staff to spend time planning for a park, I hope you will get the financial facts to know whether this is financially feasible, and information from urban planners to support the underlying theory that this park would be good for downtown at all.

Thanks for your service to all of us,
Margaret

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Author, *Giving it all away: the story of William W. Cook and his Michigan Law Quadrangle*, 2011, \$25 from Amazon.com