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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011

City Ave rezoning debate continues



Simulated photo of possible redevelopment and new building heights at the intersection of City Avenue and Decker Boulevard, as shown at public meetings in Lower Merion

After resident Gary Brandeis said the City Avenue rezoning ordinance opposition was voiced by the same handful of people at every meeting, Teri Simon took the microphone to address Lower Merion's planning commission.

"We would not want you to misinterpret the fact that there aren't that many people here tonight as a lack of interest," said Simon, president of the Wynnewood Civic Association. "A lot of people who would have ordinarily been here could not come because their were other events that were scheduled."

Simon pointed out that residents concerned over the rezoning ordinance did not receive notice about the Tuesday, Oct. 25, Special Planning Commission meeting until late last week, when it was announced. Simon and Gladwyne resident Bernard McNamee pointed

out that low public attendance was a result of the meeting's late notice, which clashed with a Lower Merion School Board debate at Harrington High School and scheduled meetings for the Merion Civic Association and Gladwyne Civic Association.

While 70 residents attended the Oct. 24 public workshop, less than 30 attended Tuesday's meeting; opponents of the rezoning plan Tuesday voiced multiple concerns, ranging from increased traffic to the absence of a master plan outlining the project's visions. Some also wondered why township leaders seemed to be rushing to get the ordinance approved.

Brandeis, a commercial developer, board member of City Avenue Special Services District and Lower Merion resident, attended the meeting to support rezoning.

"I'm probably one of the only residents in support of this [ordinance]. This commercial district is important to the township as a whole, and there's always a fear of development and the unknown...the township of Lower Merion would be in a great situation financially and the tax base would be in much better shape than it is today."

Brandeis cited the traffic study, released by the township in April 2011, which he said stated the traffic would be congested whether redevelopment occurs or not.

Ward 9 commissioner candidate and Bala Cynwyd resident Richard Kaufman refuted Brandeis's comments about traffic and the claim that the voices of opposition are repetitive.

"I've traveled through the district, and I'm running for office," he said. "The general feeling of Bala Cynwyd residents who live on side streets off of City Avenue used as cut through streets when they're not suppose to be overwhelming against this plan."

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would allow the township to charge developers a fee for improvements needed from redevelopment, would not alleviate the problem.

Planning Commission member Brian Hirsch asked about the lack of master plan; he acknowledged one did not exist for this project and wanted to know if there was any detailed document outlining the project in narrative form.

Bob Duncan, township director of building and planning, said the closest thing resembling such a document were the list of goals in the ordinance.

Planning Commission member Robert Gray suggested the creation of a map of the project in place of the master plan, but Simon said the township can't mandate through a map.

Following the Oct. 25 presentation, the ordinance issue will go before the Planning Commission on Monday, Nov. 7, when members will vote whether or not to recommend it to the Board of Commissioners.

Click [here](#) for background information on the City Avenue zoning ordinance

Posted by Josh Fernandez @ 12:04 PM Permalink | 1 comment

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ABOUT MAIN LINE NEIGHBORS

Josh Fernandez is a 2011 graduate of Temple University where he studied journalism and gender studies. He was a writer and editor for The Temple News, and has interned at Philadelphia City Paper and the Philadelphia Daily News. Josh lived in Aston, Pa. in Delaware County before moving to University City in Philadelphia.

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Good article but I was mis-quoted...I said that I was the only one in attendance at the meeting in favor of the ordinance - not the only resident (in the township) in favor of the ordinance. There are numerous residents in favor of the new zoning plan. Thank you. Gary Brandeis

— gbrandeis

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