

MAIN LINE TIMES

Thursday, June 17, 2010

(Letters)

Letters: Delighted with process to get City Avenue zoning right

To the Editor:

The workshop on the City Avenue District on Monday, June 7, was terrific. There was real public involvement and a great discussion of the proposed City Avenue zoning ordinance. It was apparent that neighbors felt empowered to express their views. Some were supportive. Others were clearly opposed to significant height near their homes. Some participants expressed views which were quite nuanced as to where height and density would be appropriate and where it would not be appropriate. Many expressed concerns about traffic and assumptions about how much development local roads and intersections could handle. I am far more optimistic about the process than prior to this meeting.

Going forward, the suggestion of looking at a vision for the district is a good one. To give the neighbors and other stakeholders the ability to express concrete ideas on a vision for the district, it was helpful that the consulting architect distributed photographs of other suburban mixed-use developments. Additional photos of superb mixed-use developments of varying heights and densities would be even

better. This approach would allow neighbors to say, "This is what I want at my doorstep, for my neighborhood or for my township."

It may turn out that several visions must be merged to create the very best mixed-used zoning ordinance. For example, Santana Row in San Jose, Calif., could provide a great framework for the parcels further uphill from the Expressway, south of Belmont Avenue. The example of Market Common Clarendon in Arlington, Va., may be a model for the middle section of the district from where the topography drops in elevation. The slender residential towers of Vancouver may be appropriate further downhill closer to the Expressway.

This rezoning is an important opportunity for planning that will affect much of the eastern portion of the township and especially Bala. I am delighted that we are committed to maximizing public input and dialogue to get it just right.

BRIAN A. GORDON

Lower Merion Township Commissioner