



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

Dear Resident,

If you live in the West Avenue neighborhood you are probably aware of the three block lot between Alton and West Avenue from 5th to 7th streets. It is deserted other than the 7-11 and a shell of the old South Shore Hospital.

For years the future of this lot has been the subject of much debate. Rather than continue accepting this eyesore, I would like to address its future and want to engage the residents most impacted.

There are two options.

The first is to hope that the lots are filled within the current development guidelines. Currently, the areas height limitations and applicable FAR (*Floor Area Ratio - "FAR" is the way the city's development code constrains the amount of building on a specific parcel of land*) would allow the developer or subsequent developer to build low-rise buildings throughout the three lots that would have between 485 and 510 units.

Here is a rendition of a project that has already been approved.



While it is relatively low in height, it is high in density and will effectively create a wall from 5th to 7th street on West Avenue.

I am not a big fan as all this project will do is bring greater intensity into an already congested intersection.

There is another option that is being floated by the developer and some of the neighbors.

If the City would agree to give a variance to allow the Developer to build a taller and skinnier building on the 5th street block (which is currently beyond the Developer's rights), the Developer would agree to donate most of the remaining land on the 6th and 7th street blocks for a park of between 3 and 4 acres.

It could include many amenities consistent with the neighborhood such as dog park, tot lot, health walk, and possibly water elements. It would also include commercial/residential elements on the east side of the 6th and 7th street lots that would permit cafes to activate the area. The developer would build and grant easements for a walk-over that would connect the bay walk from south of 5th to north of 5th. All of these details are up for discussion.

Here is one rendition of option #2 that the Developer provided.



From my perspective this plan is intriguing. A tall skinny building will have less residents and many of them will likely not even live here full time. The current development plan will

likely have many more full time residents who will further congest the area. And of course there would be no park in option #1. The Developer would have to find a way to accommodate the parking for the Floridian that currently uses a surface lot on 7th street.

As is often the case, the challenge to finding consensus is in the details. And there are many details at issue:

- The height of the building;
- The size of the floorplate of each floor;
- The building's orientation;
- Whether we allow the Developer to move some or all of his FAR from 6th and 7th street to 5th;
- The size of the park;
- How close the park is to street level grade;
- Parking for the Floridian residents across the street

I have convened a series of meetings with the Developer and various residents – as might be expected, different iterations of option #2 have emerged. A group of interested residents have created their own iteration of option #2. I am sure other versions will emerge. No decisions have been made, but I am committed to moving this towards consensus.

At the next City Commission meeting (on Wednesday morning) we will briefly discuss this item without public debate and likely refer it to our Land Use Committee where it is my hope that it will receive plenty of attention and community input. I urge you to engage our Commission and City Staff so we, as a community, can make an informed and thoughtful decision.

Thanks,



Dan