

Kalawa, Christiana

Subject: FW: [External] Proposed Development at Mission Grove Parkway North and Alessandro

From: Lecia Elzig <lelzig@msn.com>

Sent: Friday, October 2, 2020 10:18 AM

To: Edwards, Erin <EEwards@riversideca.gov>

Subject: [External] Proposed Development at Mission Grove Parkway North and Alessandro

Dear Mayor Bailey, City Council Members, and Planning Commission:

I am a resident of the community known as Mission Grove North, the mature housing development off Mission Grove Parkway North and Alessandro. I am writing regarding the proposed development of the property where the old ATT building stands on the northwest corner of Mission Grove Parkway North and Alessandro.

This property is zoned as office zoning, not commercial. The purchasers/developers of the property want to change the zoning to commercial and put in either a 7/11 convenience store or a car wash. The overwhelming majority of residents of this community are strongly opposed to both. There are already three convenience stores within a block, two of which are at the same intersection (Shell station/convenience store at southeast corner of intersection, 76 station and convenience store at southwest corner of intersection, Arco station and convenience store one block east on Alessandro).

The last thing this community needs is another convenience store. Although I live in Ward 4 and my Ward was not part of the 2018 city council elections, I watched those elections closely. The preponderance of convenience stores instead of retail that provides genuine services to the residents was a significant issue, with candidates promising to limit the growth of convenience stores. This same approach needs to be applied now. Another convenience store would significantly impact traffic congestion at this intersection. Convenience stores tend to attract loiterers. Convenience stores serve the transient population that drives past, not the residents where they are located. Convenience stores drive down property values. Convenience stores are bad for residents, particularly when there is already an abundance of them at this location. The city council must act to protect the people they were elected to serve.

The second option presented for development was a self-serve car wash. This was presented by the developer as an alternative to a convenience store. Residents were asked to support a self-serve car wash. Many did, because they thought this was the lesser of two evils. I present that we also do not need another car wash. There is already a car wash at the Mission Grove Plaza and it would clearly be negatively impacted by the installation of a self-serve car wash across the street. How about we support an existing business in a failing and mostly empty shopping center that is already at that intersection? Although a self-serve car wash would not impact traffic as severely as

a convenience store, it also does not best serve the residents of the Mission Grove community. A self-serve car wash is a low end business that will negatively impact property values, much like a convenience store.

Further, the developer has not been forthcoming or adequately communicative about community Zoom meetings that are supposed to address residents' concerns. Invitations to the first meeting went out to a select few. Fortunately, those individuals widely publicized the meeting via social media. The most recent meeting was held on the night of the presidential debate and the time directly conflicted with the debate. After complaints, the time was moved to 30 minutes earlier. This meant people who wanted to engage in their electoral process by watching the debate could only be in the meeting for 30 minutes. The developer is clearly scheduling and managing these meetings to garner minimal attendance by residents. Additionally, the purpose of these meetings is singular: to convince the residents to agree with and support their proposals. They are a waste of time because the real decision making power lies with the city. It is abundantly clear that the majority of residents do not want a car wash or a convenience store.

The real issue at hand is the matter of zoning. The developers need a zoning change to put in either of the two businesses they are proposing. The city has the power to deny the zoning change and I urge you do so. I am certain the people who purchased the property from ATT knew the property's zoning when they bought it. They took a calculated risk that they could persuade the city to approve a zoning change. Do not make the residents of the Mission Grove community pay the price for their poor investment. Deny the zoning change!

Instead of chasing easy revenue by accommodating developers with this type of plan, Councilmember Conder should focus his efforts on reinvigorating Mission Grove Plaza. The residents of this community went without a local grocery store for over a year when Ralph's sold to Stater Brothers. The center lost another anchor store when K-Mart closed. The center is notorious for failing businesses. One business owner told me the rents were exorbitant for the location and stated he believes the center serves only as a tax write off for the owner, who doesn't care that half of his units are empty. He blamed that for the failure of many of the new businesses there. How many frozen yogurt shops have failed at this center? Off the top of my head I can count three in the past few years (long before the impact of COVID 19). This is only one small example. Many of the storefronts are vacant; storefronts that could provide needed services to the local residents. When will Councilmember Conder take action here, in a situation that could have great positive impact on the local residents? There are vibrant residential communities all over this area; communities that could easily support retail services at this center if the owner cared to actually rent his units. Councilmember Conder should be looking at the owner of this center and applying pressure to ensure its vibrancy, not selling out the residents for the sake of developer who has no concern for the neighborhoods they are impacting.

This matter speaks to the greater issue of Riverside's economy overall. Our city council should be actively recruiting sustainable businesses that provide good paying jobs; businesses that will positively contribute to the healthy economic growth of our city. More convenience stores, self-

serve car washes, and other low end retail businesses do not reflect Riverside's beloved motto as the City of Arts and Innovation. Councilmember Conder, start innovating! Start protecting the residents you serve.

In summary: DENY THE ZONING CHANGE!

Respectfully,

Lecia Elzig
124 Mission Grove Parkway North
(951)315-8692

cc Mayor
City Council
City Manager
City Attorney
ACMs
DCM
C&ED Director