

2/10/2021

Re: Case Number 1-C-21-RZ property on Merchants Drive

Commissioners, I am writing on behalf of the Norwood Community Association (formerly Norwood Homeowners Association). NCA has had many open community conversations regarding the property to be developed at 2400/2600 Merchants Dr and 5291 Oakhill Dr. We have had one of the more intentionally honest conversations between developer and neighborhood that we could have imagined. And we want to thank everyone who has voiced questions/concerns as well as everyone who has sought answers in this process.

Our concerns as neighbors remain the impact a development that has been proposed will inevitably have on traffic and schools. NCA is not anti-development and we certainly embrace all our residents whether renting or homeowners. We understand the development plans to add as much as 250 units on this property. We understand the need for zoning change AG to RN-5 to spread these units out to create a more appealing product for their renters as well as present a more aesthetic property for the neighborhood.

We also have explained our fear to the developer that this represents nearly a 50% increase in apartment units to an already congested area of our neighborhood. This property on Merchants Dr, as you know, is nearly equal distance from our elementary school and middle school being a little over 1 mile from each. Both schools have challenges and we are very proud of the way they teach all students. The administration(s), teachers and volunteers at these schools represent remarkable educational opportunities in the face of the changing language/ cultural barriers in an ever-changing Knoxville.

We also know that the staff recommendation for this property is to re-zone to RN-3. Unfortunately, we have been told that this zoning would limit the developer's creativity and return on investment so much that they may withdraw their application and seek to build on the front 7 acres as C-N.

After much deliberation and many conversations with neighbors most directly affected, we ask that you consider the work of the staff's recommendation of RN-3 as the most permissive and staying AG as the most restrictive.

There is not an option, as we see it, that gives both developer and community equal wins. If RN-3 gave them enough space to get their projected ROI or RN-5 limited the density of the project and lessened the impact on our neighborhood we might have better options.

We appreciate your time and attention to the needs of all Knoxville and appreciate the time to speak on this project.