

I was an active participant as a community member when the South Waterfront Vision plan was developed, and it's clear to me that the current proposal for the Kerbela site doesn't respect the rules or the spirit of that plan. Back then, everyone involved worked hard to set standards that would make the area feel approachable and easy to walk through. We reached a lot of compromises between neighbors, land owners, and developers, and there's no reason to keep renegotiating those basics every time a new project comes along.

One of the most important parts of the plan was limiting block sizes to keep the neighborhood pedestrian-friendly. The goal was to allow the public to pass through and engage with each development. Violating these restrictions presents a significant issue, as the integrity of the entire design relies on every participant adhering to the established regulations. The main question should be whether it's possible to follow the existing code—if it is, we shouldn't be handing out exceptions just because a developer prefers a different layout. Zoning rules are public knowledge when property is bought, and wanting a more profitable design isn't a "hardship." A real hardship only exists if the property literally can't be used for anything under the current rules.

It's also frustrating to see the developer targeting the "active, 55+ market" by selling them on a lifestyle that exists specifically because previous builders followed the rules and the City and citizens invested in the vision. This brings up a big question: are we going to throw away the progress we've made, or stay committed to the original vision? Should we let large developers profit from our community's hard work without contributing back to that community? The South Waterfront is a great place to build exactly because of the people who stuck to the plan. We shouldn't be afraid to keep going that way; developers will still build here even if we insist they follow the code; in fact, they will be more likely to do so as they will have the confidence to invest in an area they know will continue to get better with time.