

April 12, 2007

Mayor Pat McCrory
600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

RE: Re-zoning Petition 2007-046
Petitioner: Gateway Homes, LLC



Dear Mayor McCrory;

The petitioner presented this petition at the April monthly Historic North Charlotte Neighborhood Association meeting. We, the HNCNA, ask that the City table this decision two months in order to allow time for the neighborhood to get questions answered and potential issues resolved.

This is a huge project at the core of our neighborhood that will profoundly impact NoDa's future. We learned of this project first from the charneck.org website, not from the petitioner. The petitioner approached the neighborhood at such a time as to allow only one neighborhood meeting between then and the City's public hearing date. This allowed no time for negotiation, clarification or amendment as is common with a project of this size. The developer has done other large projects in our neighborhood in the past, and thus was fully aware of our process and our schedule.

After preliminary consideration, the neighborhood supports the size and scale of this project in theory. We support denser development in anticipation of the light rail stop in our neighborhood at the right locations. This parcel is perfect for such development as it does not border single-family parcels and is at the core of our business district. It will help to buffer the neighborhood from the commercial rail line and will be a great improvement over the existing inter-modal truck station in terms of appearance and truck noise. We do, however, have three major concerns that must be addressed before we will accept this project:

First, we are concerned about the traffic that the project will generate and how that traffic will enter the neighborhood. The 320 units on "site A" will all empty onto E 33rd St. 33rd Street empties onto N. Davidson St. While there will be a stub connection to the neighboring parcel, this may not improve traffic circulation, as that parcel also empties onto N. Davidson St via 35th. The only improvement that this may offer is if traffic can reach 36th Street, but this will require either the use of a railroad easement that may be a part of the light rail line or the demolition of some

existing building space. Both of these options could be unlikely. A developer who may or may not be interested in relieving the petitioner's traffic woes owns this adjacent property.

Therefore, as it stands now, we can only assume that all traffic from site A will reach N. Davidson Street. Using CDOT analysis, we estimate that this will create an additional 1,000 to 2,000 car trips per day onto this two-lane street. At rush hour, the traffic light at N. Davidson and 36th Street has multiple light cycle delays and creates stalled traffic all the way down past 33rd Street. The additional traffic from this project may necessitate the need for a stoplight at 33rd and N Davidson and/or dedicated turn lanes. We do not care if the city or the petitioner pays for these improvements. However, they need to be studied and a solution needs to be found and budgeted before this project moves forward. We cannot wait ten years after the fact for the City to address this problem after it is created. Ideally, the City will find another potential means for access to the site through the rail easements to further relieve the traffic burden.

The second major issue is the quality of construction. The petitioner has already developed two major multi-family projects in our neighborhood. One in particular, The Renaissance, has generated many customer complaints and has suffered from flooding in some units. This property also has traffic and maintenance concerns that were expressed by residents at the neighborhood meeting. The petitioner was not interested in addressing these concerns and felt that they were unrelated to the project at hand. We disagree, as this history is the only information we have to go by to help us determine the quality of the product that will be built in the neighborhood and how much we can trust the developer to build what was proposed. We need assurances that the project will be built at a level of quality beyond the bare minimum that code allows.

The final concern is the design and aesthetic appeal of the project at hand. The architectural rendering presented was relatively non-descript; we saw one elevation that showed no depth to the project, nor the variations on that design that would be applied to the other buildings. We did not see the renderings of the parking, nor the other sides of that building. The drawings presented in the petition were more extensive, but are illegible in electronic, grayscale on the City's website. We always ask developers to bring to us the same information and resources that they bring to the City, and it does not appear that this was followed in this case. The developer also chose not to bring a representative of the architectural group.

At this point, we have only history to rely upon to determine the aesthetic appeal of the finished project. Again, we look at the Renaissance. While it is perfectly appropriate as an affordable housing design on the edge of the neighborhood, such a project would not be acceptable as a centerpiece to our neighborhood and on a larger scale. This project will define NoDa's modest skyline and will set the tone of future projects in terms of quality and appeal.

We understand that quality of construction and attractiveness of design are largely outside of the boundaries of control that the City can place on a project. We ask that the City do what it can in this regard. More importantly, we are simply requesting more time to address these issues with the developer on our own. The City needs to carefully examine the traffic issue and find a solution in conjunction with the developer, The density is good for a neighborhood, but creative solutions may be necessary to make it work on such a closed-off site.

In conclusion, the HNCNA Board has agreed that consideration of petition 2007-046 should be postponed in order to gather more information and possibly find some compromises. Please contact me with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

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