

Cherrywood/38 1/2 Rezoning

From Robert Schmidt <bob@robertwschmidt.com>

Date Thu 9/26/2024 6:47 AM

To Watson, Kirk <[REDACTED]>; Pool, Leslie <[REDACTED]>; Qadri, Zo <[REDACTED]>; Harper-Madison, Natasha <[REDACTED]>; Vela, Jose <[REDACTED]>; "Chito" <[REDACTED]>; Fuentes, Vanessa <[REDACTED]>; Velasquez, Jose <[REDACTED]>; Alter, Ryan <[REDACTED]>; Alter, Alison <[REDACTED]>; Kelly, Mackenzie <[REDACTED]>; Ellis, Paige <[REDACTED]>; Beeler, Melissa <[REDACTED]>; Garcia, Alexis <[REDACTED]>; Leffler, Ben <[REDACTED]>; Tomko, Jonathan <[REDACTED]>; Harden, Joi <[REDACTED]>; Qadri, Zo <[REDACTED]>

Cc Jim Walker <[REDACTED]>; Girard Kinney <[REDACTED]>

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Dear Councilman Quadri, Mayor Watson, and members of the Austin City Council,

I am writing to **urge you to oppose and postpone the pending request for rezoning on 38th ½ Street in the central Austin Cherrywood neighborhood.** The purpose of the rezoning will result in:

- the demolition of Cherrywood Coffeehouse (an Austin/neighborhood institution); and
- the demolition of 74 very affordable apartments currently housing diverse lower and middle income Austinites (the Alma apartments) to be replaced by upscale condominiums/apartments.

You and other members of the Austin City Council have campaigned on the desire to make Austin more affordable for middle and lower income Austinites. This is what we all want. Demolishing 74 presently affordable apartments will have the exact opposite effect, pushing lower income, ethnically diverse people out of central Austin and our neighborhood. Tearing down Cherrywood Coffeehouse (as well as Delwood Cleaners and Monarch convenience store) will take away long-beloved, walkable neighborhood businesses that "make Austin Austin."

As noted in a letter recently sent to you, the Cherrywood Neighbor Association opposes this rezoning request at this time and requests that it be postponed. Although I am writing this letter on my own behalf, I am a member of the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association Steering Committee. I am part of a CNA group that has been working with the developers (Narrow Road Group) and their representatives (Drenner Group) for approximately a year to obtain commitments through restrictive covenants to address these issues. **Thus far, the developers have refused to make any meaningful commitments to the neighborhood or the City.** We have asked that that affordable housing be included in the new development to replace the 74 units that will be demolished (beyond the minimum required by law if they build under DB90 zoning). The developers have refused this request. We have also made a proposal to the effect that if Cherrywood Coffeehouse is demolished, the developers commit to at least one restaurant in the replacement mixed use building. The developers have refused to make this commitment also. We have also asked for other agreements/commitments including preserving rights of way for the Red Line parkway. Again, the developers have not agreed to any of these proposals.

The Cherrywood neighborhood is not opposed to redevelopment that is in character with and benefits the neighborhood and the City. The legacy businesses and affordable apartments affected by this rezoning are adjacent to single family homes and an elementary school. The land at issue is not in a highly commercial area and protrudes directly into the neighborhood. The Narrow Road Group and Drenner are asking to change the "rules"/present zoning, which was put in place for a reason and limits height to 40 feet. While many in the neighborhood (like me) support responsible redevelopment, **I ask that you oppose or postpone the pending rezoning request and encourage the developers to work in good faith with the neighborhood.** The City Council on May 30, 2024, also voted to support the Hancock-Cherrywood Area Plan (HCAP) to help shape a thoughtful vision for redevelopment in this area. This rezoning request is premature, not in keeping with the spirit of the HCAP and will not benefit our neighborhood or the City.

I and our neighborhood ask for your help. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Bob Schmidt

Robert W. Schmidt he/him
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