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New PUD zoning: Insensitive "Urban Feel" Next to Neighborhoods

I am the President of La Hacienda Historic District, a neighborhood of single family homes between Third and Seventh Street, and just North of Thomas Road. Up to seven story "urban feel" apartments are proposed to replace existing the one and two story Country Club Apartments next to our homes: more than triple the current height and about twice the density.

The zoning number is Z-119-07-4. Tell your Councilman to vote no on October 15, 2008.

It is Phoenix's first ever use of new PUD zoning where a developer proposes all aspects of the new zoning. This PUD has an "urban feel" containing height, density and setbacks that belong in the Transit Overlay District. A billion dollars has been spent on light rail, yet this rezoning undermines the efforts and sacrifices made to have an urban Central corridor, an area that anyone can see remains underdeveloped. This property is outside the overlay where height and density belongs. The Developer claims the project is close enough to overlay to be influenced by it, but the overlay is rendered meaningless if close justifies a "urban feel" outside its bounds.

As a compromise to promote redevelopment, I requested that the height next to our homes be limited two stories, but stepping up to a greater than currently allowed height further away. The Developer's response was that the project needed an "urban feel," which means reduced setbacks with four and five story buildings next to our properties, invasively looking into our backyards and windows, and with seven stories towering over everything. The project's design places most of its open space on streets interior to the project and above grade on parking structures that are surrounded by apartment towers. Thus, the project's "urban feel" residents will enjoy views of the open space surrounding our homes (our backyards) from balconies, and yet the project hides much of its open space in interior courtyards. The open space should be used as a buffer to protect nearby neighborhoods.

The Developer claims the "urban feel" provides a "transitional" benefit for the neighborhood, not transitional to existing buildings, but to other zoning nearby. This means nothing more than we are putting tall and dense buildings next to your homes because someday there might be a taller and denser development further from your homes.

A last excuse for an "urban feel" is that the project is on a major arterial corridor. As result, many existing neighborhoods and historic districts qualify for this height and density in a PUD as they are almost all between major streets.

This "urban feel" PUD also entitles Developer to substantial reductions in the number of parking spaces. The reasoning is that the project contains "neighborhood commercial" and customers that drive can use empty residential spaces during the day. The Developer forgets his

claim that residents use the light rail- leaving their vehicles at home - and also ignores what happens after work when the "neighborhood commercial" is still open for business. Adding insult to injury, the project also gets really big signs, so that cars whizzing by on Seventh Street -with no where to park- will stop to use the "neighborhood commercial".

Finally, the Developer seeks to destroy our neighborhood for a project it knows is doomed. The Developer has told us it has a confidential "feasibility study" with which it does not agree and will not share.

We would love to see the property redeveloped with appropriate scaling, setbacks and common sense. Advise your City Councilman not to be fooled the words "urban feel" and "transitional". This Developer should be told "no" until he deals reasonably with neighborhoods as is required in a PUD submittal. **The City Council vote is on October 15, 2008 and the rezoning number is Z-119-07-4.**