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President, North Country Club Homeowners Association
37 North Country Club Drive
Phoenix, Arizona 85014

June 18, 2008

Councilman Tom Simplot
City of Phoenix
200 West Washington Street
11th Floor
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Re: 7th Street and Earll Drive Rezoning Application (Z-119-07-04)

Dear Councilman Simplot:

As the President of the North Country Club Homeowners Association and lead spokesperson for the residents in the surrounding area, I want to clarify our position regarding the current rezoning application for the southwest corner at 7th Street and Earll Drive.

As you know, the homes in North Country Club and La Hacienda Historic District border the proposed project. Our historic homes represent a diverse collection of unique architectural styles of Phoenix from yesteryear. In an effort to preserve the character and value of their neighborhoods, many residents, over the years, have invested substantial dollars in restoring and improving their homes. These homes have become not only a valuable asset to their respective owners but also to the cultural heritage of Phoenix.

We all agree that the project area should be redeveloped. In fact, we welcome and support redevelopment as long as it is accomplished in an appropriate, responsible and reasonable manner. This includes ensuring that any redevelopment is compatible with the historic nature of the surrounding homes. Redevelopment that fails to take into account the distinctive character of our homes, lowers our property values and intrudes upon our privacy is inappropriate, irresponsible and completely unreasonable. Frankly, we find this project totally unacceptable to our personal interests and to the public interest of Phoenix.

In all honesty, we have been disappointed by the manner in which this project has been proposed. Initially, the developer sought to obtain C2 High Rise rezoning with a 180-foot high-rise building. However, the developer withdrew that proposal due to overwhelming public opposition. Now the developer has proposed to rezone and transform the existing 7.29 acres of R-3, R-4 and R-5 into 8.7 acres of Urban Residential (UR), high-rise development designation.

This zoning would allow for over 400 apartment/condominium units and 15,000 square feet of commercial space, with heights up to 75 feet.

Unfortunately, the City Planning Staff has recommended approval of this rezoning request. Although Staff may have been unaware of the nature and extent of the neighborhood opposition, the developer's failure to include required information regarding dwelling unit density, street setbacks, interior setbacks, lot coverage or parking is certainly problematic.

We adamantly oppose any effort by the developer to change the zoning to UR. The current R-3, R-4 and R-5 designations are well established and provide adequate opportunity for a redevelopment project. Simply stated, the UR designation allows for too much density and intensity adjacent to the historic residential areas located on two sides of the project. The project and our homes are within the Encanto Gradient area. However, they are not located in the Encanto Core, not in the Transit Overlay District, not in the High-Rise District (7th Avenue to 7th Street south of Thomas Road) and not in the Central Avenue Corridor (3rd Avenue to 3rd Street north of Thomas Road) – where UR type development is better suited.

The existing zoning, while allowing more intense development, guarantees neighborhood safeguards via limits on density and lot coverage, as well as requirements on setbacks and landscaping. These are significant neighborhood protections that are not mandated in UR zoning. Not surprisingly, we are not prepared to relinquish those protections.

The proposed building height for portions of the development will compromise the privacy we have worked so hard to create and preserve. On NW and NE blocks of the project, seven-story towers will peer into our backyards and homes of the Country Club residents on the east and northeast and of the La Hacienda residents on the south and southwest. Obviously, we cannot acquiesce to this intrusion on our privacy.

We are long-term residents who care deeply about sustaining one of last vestiges of historical homes in Phoenix. We believe that responsible redevelopment — that is compatible with area — can occur without rezoning this property to UR. The existing zoning, with appropriate neighborhood protections, can provide the basis for an acceptable compromise.

Councilman Simplot, thank you for your time and understanding of our issues. Without exaggeration, your support in defeating this project is vital to the continued viability of our neighborhoods, the constituents in your district and to our city itself.

Sincerely,



Mark Mehrrens
President, North Country Club Homeowners Association

Cc: Members of Encanto Village Planning Committee
Joshua Bednarek, Encanto Village Planner