

***THE SWITZER FAMILY
369 E. CATALINA
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85012***

July 25, 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,

This letter is written on behalf of the Switzer family, Walter and Grace Switzer, and our daughter Jean Switzer. We appreciate the time and effort that you have devoted to our neighborhood, and remember when you lived on East Catalina.

We have lived at 369 East Catalina Drive in the La Hacienda Historic District for over 50 years. We would like to see the property at the Southwest corner of Earll Drive and Seventh Street redeveloped to better compliment our historic residential neighborhood. As you know, it is currently one-story apartments along Catalina and steps up to two stories further away from our street.

Over the years we have had our rezoning challenges, beginning in the first summer after we bought our home at 369 East Catalina Drive. When we returned from our extended summer vacation, this very subject property had been rezoned to permit the current Country Club Apartments. Our voices were never heard as a result of the timing of that first rezoning application.

We always felt that the apartment community was a big change from our single family homes, particularly the bigger homes with large heavily landscaped lots on the East side of our neighborhood. We would have preferred that the property had been developed differently, with more of a landscaped buffer and single-story units between the density of the current apartments and our neighborhood. We always considered ourselves lucky that existing Country Club Apartments did not take full advantage of the rezoning that had been approved in our absence and that would have allowed four-story buildings in our residential neighborhood.

Eventually the Country Club Apartments became an even greater burden to our neighborhood, even though over the years we have liked many of our neighbors who reside there. The Country Club Apartments just did not have the useful lifespan of the single-family homes across the street from them and adjoining them. Through time, some residents clearly did not share our community values and at other times the owners of the property permitted it to fall into disrepair.

During this time of trouble, our neighborhood stayed together and joined forces to reduce the impact of the unfortunate growth and density. Neighbors were eventually successful in having Catalina closed off from 7th Street, mitigating the impacts of the property that we could address. Today, we agree that this property is ripe for redevelopment again. Our neighborhood should be recognized and rewarded for surviving this initial round for poorly managed development. This time we have great hope that our concerns and the concerns of the rest of our neighbors will be heard, having the ability to speak with the experience of having witnessed and survived the last round of development in the area.

Now is the opportunity for the City and the new owner to plan a development that is more consistent with our neighborhood than the previous use. Quite frankly, we are disappointed with the plans that we have seen -- proposals even more inconsistent and obnoxious to our quiet single-family residential neighborhood. One story units will be replaced with two-story units, and two-story units will be replaced with four-, five-, six- and even seven-story mammoth apartments. The proposal calls for even taller buildings, less ground level open space, and higher density. In short, this development does not belong intermixed within our historic neighborhood and the other neighborhoods in the area.

To advance the cause of inappropriate rezoning, the developer seizes upon rezoning mistakes of the past: the first rezoning of the Country Club Apartments (done in our absence); the 1964 rezoning North of Earl on 7th Street; and, the 1971 rezoning catastrophe for the old Mountain Bell building at Earl and 3rd Street. Although these properties have zoning that apparently permits much taller buildings and more density than currently exists, not a single one of these properties has ever been built anywhere close to the maximum of the permitted zoning. What is important to the decision on whether to rezone this property is not what other zoning in the area may permit, but what has actually been built. What exists are one- and two-story apartment complexes, and a single 13-story "administrative use" building (now vacant), and, of course, acres of neighborhoods of single-family homes. Closer to the property than any other highrise is a golf course. As far as we know, no building permits have been obtained for any of these other properties for anything other than what currently exists.

The developer and the City should look to our existing and thriving historic neighborhood and not overshadow it with concrete and glass canyons.

The “Conservation, Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Element” of the City of Phoenix General Plans, in the executive summary, states:

Historic, cultural and character perseverance: protect historic buildings, districts, and resources through historic overlay districts; *preserve Phoenix’s unique qualities and neighborhood character; and encourage compatible development in and around them”* (Italics added)

The General Plan, “Neighborhood Element”, in its executive summary, states:

Compatible neighborhood development, ensure that new development in or adjacent to neighborhoods is compatible.

The rezoning for this proposed project does not preserve our historic neighborhood, and is not a compatible development. There is no amount of promised neighborhood-friendly storefronts, offered as if it is some kind of benefit only to the neighborhood, that can make up for seven stories of concrete and windows densely packed with residential units. The proposal is not sensitive to the height and density of our neighborhood, which borders it, yet the presence of our neighborhood increases the value of the development even as the development damages our property. There is an old folk tale about killing the goose that lays the golden egg that seems appropriate here.

We sincerely believe that the present owner should work with the neighbors to successfully redevelop the property under the current mix of R-3, R-4 and R-5 zoning. This was the zoning on the property when it was purchased, and this zoning is much more consistent with our neighborhood. Now is the opportunity to heal the wounds created in our neighborhood by poorly planned developments and the rezoning mistakes of a prior generation, not to make them worse. The City, our neighbors and this out-of-state developer should do what is best for our community, and what is best for the community is to keep the current zoning and redevelop the property so that it is consistent with the current adjoining uses.

Walter Switzer

Grace Switzer

Jean Switzer

c: Joshua Bednarek