

From: [Doug Hawes-Davis](#)
To: [Emily Gluckin](#)
Cc: [Eva Dunn-Froebig](#)
Subject: Mill Site Special Zoning District Amendment
Date: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 3:05:00 PM

Dear Emily -

Please consider the following my comments on the letter dated October 1, 2021 concerning the request from Millsite Revitalization Project, LLC to amend the standards of the special zoning district.

We have lived across California St. from the Mill Site since well before anything was built there, and attended a few public meetings as the project was being considered by the public. Our position from the beginning was that the entire site would have been much better used for parks, community gardens, open space, schools, and other public amenities, which are becoming increasingly crowded in downtown Missoula, and as the neighborhoods fill in with more and more residents, demand for those amenities will only grow. That said, when the project was being pitched by the developers to the community and neighborhood, we realized that ship sailed long before those public meetings.

At the time, as we reviewed the plans and listened to the developers' pitch for the project, there were three things that made the plan barely tolerable as residents of the existing neighborhood. One was the inclusion of a couple of blocks of single family housing in the district off of Idaho St and Montana St that would have created at least a small buffer between the existing single family neighborhood and the very high density new development. We have known for years that there is essentially no chance of that type of housing being built there despite the fact that there was a long waiting list of interested buyers for those lots of single family residences.

Second was the small "pocket park" of green space adjacent to California St. in the original map/design for the development. That disappeared when the city purchased the parcel and gave it to Homeward for the construction of Sweetgrass Commons.

Finally, we liked that the project included guaranteed ground level commercial space throughout much of the area that would likely include restaurants, corner stores, and other retail that could over time move our neighborhood toward a more walkable/bikeable extension of downtown. But, now the developers would like to back out of that requirement as well. If virtually all of what is constructed in this special district is high density residences and office space, the goals of creating a walkable/bikeable neighborhood cannot possibly be realized. I'm sure that the response will be that making this change does not guarantee that those types of businesses will *not* be established in that zone. But, of course, it practically does guarantee those uses will not exist there because residential development is simply more profitable. Why else would the developers make this request?

I'm sure that there will also be motivation to accept this request so that the city and URD-2 can more quickly add tax revenue from the vacant parcels in this zone. But, the fact that this development has moved at a snails' pace is not a good justification to just give in and accept a different set of uses than what was sold to the community originally. Nor is the prospect of getting tax revenue somewhat more quickly a sound rationale for making such a dramatic change to the allowed uses. It is seriously not comprehensible to me how these parcels have

not been sold and developed much sooner, but perhaps the developer is holding out for maximum possible profit? But, maximum profit is not a logical variable when considering long-term planning for a community. Plenty of profit will be made with the current allowed uses intact.

Many of us in the Riverfront Neighborhood reluctantly accepted the reality that a massive new development would be built on this site which had been de-facto open space for a couple decades, but that acceptance came with the understanding that the development would include several important components, all of which have been eroded away in the years that followed. As a Missoula resident of 31 years, and a resident in this neighborhood for better than half of that time, this situation gives the sense that the developers have the upper hand in every decision and frankly makes a mockery of the public process for planning and development of our community. I strongly recommend this request be denied.

Sincerely,
Doug Hawes-Davis

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Cc: Eva Dunn-Froebig