

Dear Council members,

I am writing today in support of the Ordinance, implementing the Resolution of August 8th, that calls for a zoning study of West Grand Avenue and a moratorium on development during the study.

Why a study & why now

As you all know, during the past few months we've heard strong viewpoints about what zoning should be on Grand, but we have not had a proper forum to reconcile them. I support this Ordinance because it solves that – it gives the opportunity for thoughtful study and an open discussion facilitated by the Planning staff, with all parties working towards a full solution.

We discovered this spring that Grand is zoned RM2, multi-family and up to 5 stories. But directly across the alley, zoning is mostly single-family housing. The landscape has changed a lot since the 1970's when the zoning was written. As I understand it, the City's strategic goals are to get to higher density, but preserve balanced, strong "established neighborhoods." I believe that an alley just doesn't do enough to transition between 5-story buildings and single-family houses, especially with 4 bedroom units designed for undergraduate students. I agree with the Resolution passed in August that current zoning probably isn't serving the City's goals, but we have strong opinions on both sides and we need information, discussion and collaboration to reach a vision for the future and ensure we keep that wonderful neighborhood.

In addition, I believe this study could solve the inconsistencies in zoning along Grand - nearby commercial development is currently limited to 3 stories and UST can only build 40-foot housing, which means now the players don't have consistent rules and property owners don't know what to expect.

I'm not sure I've heard anyone against having a study. And I'm not sure anyone could honestly say there are no issues to solve. There are. I feel it's not anti-development or anti-student to take a few months to devote to study and planning and I hope you, along with the students, developers, and property owners, will support fully enacting the Resolution.

Why a moratorium

Any zoning recommendations from a study may well be moot if we don't keep the status quo while we're figuring them out.

Say we don't have a moratorium. Development proceeds on a second, or maybe third 5-story housing project. Now the character of the block and those nearby is set. No subsequent zoning regulations are going to modify those buildings. And we have de facto new zoning without the study and discussion we so desperately need. As you know, this point isn't hypothetical. At least one developer has submitted a site plan to build a second 5-story building. Please vote to preserve the status quo and allow staff and the city residents to make an informed choice on what West Grand should be.

A heartfelt "Thank you"

Finally, a "thank you." I thank Councilman Stark for bringing this forward and all of you for passing the initial Resolution. Many of you were here in June when my neighbors and I appealed the student housing proposal on Grand. I knew I might lose that appeal, but the reason I fought so hard was I hoped everyone in the city would see that there are issues and start a discussion about zoning. Thank you for listening in June. Thank you for caring about our neighborhood so much you want to drive to the best solution. Please pass the Ordinance and let everyone start that hard work.

Sincerely,
Rina Cooper
Formerly of 2129 Lincoln