

**WE THE PEOPLE** OF THE BROADMOOR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, THE HISTORIC SOUTH HIGHLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, THE QUERBES PARK FOUNDATION AND SHREVEPORT GREEN WOULD LIKE TO FORMALLY APPEAL THE MPC DECISION OF DECEMBER 7, 2016 IN FAVOR OF THE APPLICANT SOUTHERN STORAGE. (Case No. C-86-16)

For many reasons that will be spelled out below we are in unanimous opposition to this decision. We represent all of the surrounding neighborhoods of this property and we would like to be respected as such and have our voices heard. We think the outcome of this is VITAL to the most established neighborhoods in our city and we would be deeply grateful for your consideration of the FACTS in this letter.

It seems appropriate to refer to the MPC Staff Report made by professionals who do this work every day on behalf of our city and we quote verbatim the staff report summary and highlight the salient facts of the staff report below for consideration.

*“This site is situated between Highland Neighborhood, Broadmoor Neighborhood and Querbes City Park and Golf Course. (South Highlands and Waterside were omitted for unknown reasons) While storage is an allowed use under the current zoning district, a storage facility of this size does NOT enhance the characteristics and ideals of both of these neighborhoods, nor the planned efforts to revitalize Querbes Park and Golf Course. From a planning perspective, a storage facility of this magnitude is a STERILE use, in that it will not have an active or viable presence in the neighborhood. In an area heavily invested in the history and art of Shreveport, a mixed use development which strengthens the neighborhood and creates more vibrancy in the area would be more appropriate. It should also be noted that this property will be zoned C-2 under the proposed UDC, therefore, if this case is approved, this site will be NON CONFORMING because the recommended C-2 would NOT allow for ANY storage facilities. Likewise the exterior façade design of the building and the level of landscape provided will be important compatibility factors that the MPC Staff will emphasize once the applicant submits a site plan application. “*

*Other Staff Report Notes:*

*The conceptual plan and elevations are for informational purposes only and there is NO guarantee that it will be constructed this way.*

*20,000 ft. of Storage building is a use by right in B-2A Zoning.*

*In this subject area building footprints are typically 20-40% of the site size. (2.38 acres)*

*In the surrounding neighborhoods building footprint sizes range from 22-34% with an average of 30%.*

From a city wide perspective the average building footprint in the areas with the highest concentration of properties zoned B-2A is 25% and the highest percentage in the entire city is 40% at 8910 Linwood.

*The final staff recommendation is for coverage of 34% of the site.*

Is anybody TOTALLY confused yet ? We certainly are.

You might now begin to understand our extreme disappointment in the decision by the MPC to ignore our concerns and most important of all, to ignore their own professional planning staff in such a significant manner. For the MPC to recommend an enlargement to expand this project by 47% over the staff recommendation in order to accommodate the “profitability” of the applicant is egregious at minimum.

It only gets worse for those of us that have real knowledge of these neighborhoods. This knowledge seemed to be either lost on the MPC, minimized with disinterest, or favoritism for the applicant or some combination of all. We make the following additional points that seemed to be lost in this very questionable process.

There was NO representation by the neighborhood and the property owner that will be negatively affected the most and we would like to speak in their absence for what we believe is in their best interest.

The neighborhood of Waterside Park will be further isolated by this sterile use with a complete absence of job generation and no plan for investment in this neighborhood. Waterside Park continues to decline with a rising number of adjudicated properties that the city and the parish can not or will not maintain to any standard. Gregg St., which borders the subject property, is the only avenue for the community of Waterside to have walkable access to goods and services.

The interest of the adjoining property owner to this Brookshires building was NOT represented at this meeting. This is the property known as Campbell's TV and the former El Chico's. It is currently on the market for a price that exceeds \$700,000. While we are not certain why they chose to miss this opportunity to be heard, we are very certain about the damage that this will cause. They will lose ALL visibility to most of Fern Avenue and at the discretion of the Applicant their only access to Fern Avenue. In the future there will be no means of ingress and egress across what has been historically known as a shopping center. The only means of access or the primary means of access will no longer be Fern Avenue but Gregg St. The financial degradation of this property will be permanent and extraordinary.

There seemed to be an intent by the MPC to discredit our Neighborhood Associations with their line of questioning about voting, signed petitions, etc. These are associations with limited financial resources that are run by community volunteers who make up their officers and boards. These associations are not

perfect in representing every single individual within their boundaries but please do not let perfection become the enemy of progress in the only democratic process that we do have. These associations post public notices of their meetings and function in a VERY democratic manner. This MUST be respected.

We do not believe that the notification process that only includes owners within 300 ft. of the subject site is perfect either....as a point of reference. We think 1-2 miles might be more appropriate for a zoning use and variance request of this magnitude.

While this disrespect for our Associations was plainly evident and painful to take it is even more alarming to us and perhaps even unlawful in the way the final decision on the site coverage was determined.

It is widely known that this property has never been put on the market. It is also widely known that many attempts to reach Brookshires about the sale of the property have been ignored.

The reason we believe Brookshires chose to sell to this applicant is because they overpaid for the property. The applicant has admitted as much and made the purchase price known.

The applicant stated at this hearing that the size recommendation of the professional staff might not allow his project to be profitable. The MPC then engaged the applicant and discussed a size that might make this venture "profitable". 47% larger than ALL historical norms. This behavior changes the actions of the MPC to that of a personal business advisor working on behalf on an individual applicant and NOT the public. We believe this is an alarming precedent that is damaging to the free market system and the public it is designed to protect.

In seeking legal advice we have been advised that this zoning ordinance might be unenforceable in and of itself in that it does NOT require the applicant to submit a final site plan or renderings that are enforceable. Therefore it is impossible to assess the damage or value to surrounding owners and neighbors prior to MPC approval, denial or in this case advocacy for the Applicant.

We also know that this site was zoned B-2 (Neighborhood Commercial) and that Brookshires made an application to re-zone it to B-2A in order to establish a bakery and offices in this space in 1987. In most cases of modern zoning practice this use would have been specific to Brookshires for their use only and this "spot" zoning would then revert back to B-2 and the original intention of the neighborhood if ownership of the property changed.

It has also been suggested that a moratorium be put in place on ALL zoning changes prior to the imminent adoption of the UDC. And if not a moratorium on all zoning changes certainly those that are in DIRECT conflict with the new UDC such as this site.

The irony is quite thick for all of the MPC members, their professional staff and even the attorney for the applicant, Tom Arceneaux, “flag bearers” all for the new UDC, who have now suddenly forgotten about the hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars that have been spent to enact this new zoning law that would PROHIBIT this Mini Storage use on this site altogether ?? Something about “having your cake and eating it too” ??

Moving on to more important matters and our view of this neighborhood and the city as a whole.

We have wonderful assets in the inner core of our city. Many of them connect to each other and yet they are all separated in small ways that deny the collective use and scale of the total. In a city that is trying to grow inward and not outward for huge financial reasons we think these assets must be emphasized to a larger degree.

Centenary College connects to Querbes Park and Querbes Park connects to Madison Park which connects to the Fern Ave-Ockley Bayou Park which connects to The First Baptist property and is then one block away from connecting to Betty Virginia Park. If the MPC was actually functioning as a planning department and NOT as a transactional agent there would be a long range plan in place to connect these wonderful dots, with pedestrian and bicycle use in mind, creating extraordinary value and “livability” for the citizens of our inner city. Madison Park (Brookshires) should become the “commercial village” center of our town that we have never had. Public Space, Art Space, Gathering space and local retailers. Witness the success of Marilynn's Place and Ki Mexico in this area. Modern functioning cities that do not even have rivers are starting to build their own “River Walks” to add “livable” value to their cities. We have all of these assets in place, we just either ignore them, don't use them or can't see the connection. Madison Park IS the crossroads to Highlands, Waterside, South Highlands and Broadmoor. We do not need to STERILIZE this property with an 83,000 sq. ft. Mini Storage building. It needs to be evaluated by astute planners that realize it's locational value to the community and it's vital connection to our existing park assets.

As a city we are losing the race to attract new jobs and new investment. Our neighborhoods in this area are in decline. We are watching the migration from all of our inner city to the suburbs of Southeast Shreveport and Bossier City for safety reasons and more livable neighborhoods. We believe that continued short sighted decisions like the one just made by the MPC will continue to destroy the value and charm of our inner city. We must stop this rapid progression with a new way of thinking. Or perhaps we can all move to Southeast Shreveport and be a suburb of “NOTHING”.

The Querbes Park Foundation is a legal project of Shreveport Green and was officially launched on May 24, 2016. With permission and support from SPAR this

foundation was created to resurrect this declining park and the foundation has also begun the efforts for the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhoods, specifically Waterside Park and Madison Park. The Foundation from the beginning has viewed this Brookshires property to be the “key” and the “glue” to the true renaissance of this neighborhood. Many attempts were made to acquire or control this property for future planning that were ignored by the owners.

Shreveport Green is a 26 yr. old organization in this community with significant time and investment in not only Betty Virginia Park but in the Bayou Pierre – Fern Avenue Park that borders this Brookshires property and parallels Querbes Park. This organization has been and will continue to be committed to the green space and environmental quality of our city.

In closing our appeal to the City Council of Shreveport we are reminded that this is the season when we turn our thoughts to our families and loved ones to celebrate the Christmas Holidays and the New Year. Our prayers go out to those innocent people of Syria and around the world who are under attack.

We are a small community of friends and to our friends that opposed our wishes in the MPC chambers we offer the following:

Please join us in our efforts to raise private donations to help our city maintain these vital parks of Betty Virginia and Querbes. Substantial work is underway in both parks that is being funded by private donors and supported by volunteers of the undersigned organizations.

To our many friends that support this new development on the single basis that something new is better than something old.....we get that. We offer an alternative of more meaningful planning and execution.

To our friend “Boz” Baucum we wish you continued success at Marilynns Place and a future neighbor that might lend even more value to your efforts.

To our friend Charlie Klepper and the owners of the Exxon station (Soon to be Chevron ?) we wish you many more years of success in a rebounding neighborhood.

Ahhh.....and to the Mardi Gras Krewe of Highland who use this property one day out of the year we wish you a “Community Plaza” style development that is worthy and more accommodating of your parade than ever.

To our friend Tom Arceneaux, attorney for the applicant, we thank you for your service on behalf of the community. We wish for our community the #1 thing you wished for Highland in your appeal at the UDC Town Hall meeting. “Preservation of the historical character of the neighborhood in design, landscaping and use” Un quote.

And finally. To our friend Ricky Lennard, the applicant, we hope you will be a part of the revitalization of this neighborhood in keeping with the historical zoning and future zoning use of the UDC.

With appreciation for the efforts of the entire City Council we hope that you will consider our efforts for a different inner city moving forward. One that promotes “walkability”, “livability” and a new outlook for increased values and investments.

Sincerely,

The Broadmoor Neighborhood Association

The Historic South Highlands Neighborhood Association

The Querbes Park Foundation

Shreveport Green