

Meeting/Speaker Notes • Homewood Suites Town Hall Meeting St. James Episcopal Church • Tuesday, September 19, 2017

Hosts - Fondren Renaissance Foundation and OurFondren Neighborhood Association

Moderator - Jane Alexander, Executive Director, Community Foundation of Greater Jackson

Presentation Panel - Alan Lange, Chico Patel, Ali Bhatti

Mike Peters (Peters Real Estate) - Statement

Said people have selective memory, that there was initial objection to his work with Fondren Corner and Duling School, but look at them now. Objection has been forgotten. He supports development in Fondren and Jackson and those that are putting money into Jackson, in less than 13 years, Fondren Corner is now considered by most as a Jackson landmark.

Michelle Colon - Question

In looking at the design, she said she lives across from what will be the hotel parking lot. She also volunteers for the Women's Health Clinic, aka the Pink House. She asked about parking and the flow of traffic especially during construction.

Chico Patel - Answer

Stated that the west quadrant parking lot would go in first before the development went vertical and that the main staging area during construction would be the area where Green Ghost is currently (the southern west corner of the development). There will be a property manager on site and they will reach out to area owners to advise them on issues as necessary. The timeline for demolition is 2-4 weeks and hopefully in January we will be full speed construction with a 12-13 month completion.

Chris Myers - Question

"Have you been through site plan review and does this use any federal funds at all?"

Chico Patel - Answer

"Yes, it has been approved by the city and there are no federal or city funds involved."

Jeff Karrer - Question

Fondren is a unique and different place that people love and people from the suburbs and beyond come here for that reason. People like me are invested in the neighborhood. Did city advertise site plan review? Developers and neighbors need to be partners. What is Hilton's response to the neighborhood and what's around it in regard to the brand? How can we help developers make this a better place and improve the Strip, not destroy it? I think the hotel will ruin it. I don't like the rendering. I don't think you're being good stewards of the community. How can we help you with good faith, and what do you want to take away from this as developers?

Alan Lange: Answer

We live here too and share the love of Fondren. We engaged with certain business owners and certain residents and they shared they thought there was a need for retail and walkability. We plan to make it more walkable with grading for the property - right now there is a 4' to 5' difference in grading from north to south. We will have 125 parking spaces to accommodate retail and guests.

Scott Overby (Overby Inc.) - Statement

We need to keep dollars in Jackson. It hurts to see it leave. Visitors need alternative places to stay. They stay at the Hilton King Edward 2-3x but then move on because they've exhausted things to do downtown, so they stay in Ridgeland or Madison after that. Jackson's growth is

out, not within. We want to see growth here in Jackson and find more ways to integrate growth here in Fondren. There have been opportunities such as Chik Fil A here but that is not Fondren. UMMC has a need for this type development.

Ron Chane (Studio Chane/Swell-O-Phonic) - Question

Has been a business owner for 19 years, is for growth, change and was a supporter of Peters' property. "Fondren is what it is because of what it is not." People from the suburbs come here to get away from what they are. I am worried about retail traffic and running off the locals. Why was the community left out? You knew what you wanted to do back in March.

Alan Lange: Answer

Referenced zoning change from 2005 and repeated positive quotes area businesses and orgs made at the time. Said his project fits the zoning and by definition is within proposed uses allowed in the zoning. It contains retail but the plans for that space are not complete. "I eat and drink in our restaurants and shop here too." It is not our intention to drive out anyone.

Charlie Brenner - Question

I am interested in architecture and nice job on the plans, but what about drainage and runoff from the property, roof, etc.? Where does all this go, what about storm drains?

Chico Patel - Answer

We will have underground water retention with self-contained storage tanks. No water will be released into the roadways. The tanks will slowly release the water directly into the city's system. This was a requirement of the city and we have experience in this area as many of our properties have this currently

Linda Manuel (represented in absentia by Sara Weisenberger) - Question

One of 3 homeowners left on Lorenz. Had a good relationship with renters who were displaced by the new apartments. There will be a lot of traffic, which will be a problem combined with existing traffic/parking for the apartments on Lorenz to West St, plus Oxford to Mitchell and areas in between. Asked that the developers take care of the area. What will be the traffic plan for my area?

Alan Lange: Answer

Construction traffic will be nearer to the State St. area, as the staging area for demo is in the parking lot of Green Ghost. There is a lot of debris being moved and traffic will be an issue but will do our best to contain the issues to the entry at Lorenz and State - not so much activity on the west side

Jayne Buttross - Statement

I'm a 30year resident and I've never considered Fondren a wasteland. I oppose this project. It will affect the neighbors, who should be respected. My personal opinion is mixed use presents problems. Questioned the attitudes and concern of the development team for the community. The project will impact quality of life, including traffic and infrastructure. It may even economically hurt others. Need to develop and improve what we have, not destroy it or build more. We are a neighborhood, not an industrial park or commercial area

Erica Speed (work for MS Heritage Trust but here as a Fondren resident) - Question

Cited span of time - weeks to years - that this project has been evolving based on purchasing and planning. 7 months alone since the zoning variance sign went up. In the presentation, they said they were getting rid of houses/property that were at the end of its useful life span (Alan or Chico?) and replacing it with something more meaningful, so Erica asked, "Over all this time, if you feel this is more meaningful, why did you hide it?"

Alan Lange - Answer

Bought the first parcel 10 years ago. Began adding to it 5 years ago. Said he feels no need to share all the possibilities because things may not happen. Even going back to March, not 100% sure and things are highly complicated. Financing didn't come to fruition until the last couple of months.

Jennifer Baughn (MS Dept. of Archives and History) - conceded to Erica to continue, but asked hasn't this particular development been 3 years in the making?

Scott Overby in audience responded to that question as a broker in deal saying it began with Boo Noble and trying to purchase Que Sera, but the price wasn't right. Many things such as upscale apartments were considered for site but not until sale of Que Sera could a development such as this be considered due to parking, etc.

Erica Speed - Question

Brought up the Phoenix Initiative and asked Chico if he knows what that is (he doesn't). She explained it encourages home ownership and improving property value and that FRF and St Dom had worked hard to implement it on the west side and make it successful. She referenced the web site for Heritage Hospitality Group and noted that many of the photos across various developments are exactly the same image. Where are the surrounding houses? Where is the rest of the design? What does the elevation on the backside look like?

Chico Patel - Answer admitted the photos are essentially placeholders and said he would send her actual photos of the properties. They have special designers who will make the Fondren project unique. "It will not be a prototypical Homewood Suites. It will not look like any other and I challenge you to find this unique of a hotel anywhere else"

Patrick Jerome (Rainbow Co-op) - Question

Rainbow is downhill of your development and we own our own property. We flood because the city of Jackson will approve anything. What about construction drainage, silt, storm drains filling up, and the affect of construction on our streets? What is the traffic plan? Who will be in charge of mixed-use vendors? Excited about visitors, but concerned that not everyone was consulted yet will be affected.

Alan Lange - Answer

Construction traffic and run-off is just a reality of development. We will do all we can do to address. Runoff and construction are going to be a reality. We will have a silt fence and instantly pave

Chico Patel - Answer

Underground retention tanks will go in first to help with construction drainage and runoff, then paving pf the parking lot. We have experts who have designed that. Fixing the streets is not our responsibility. That is on Jackson to do.

Susan Mitchell - Statement

Mad about the secrecy. The project doesn't fit and you know it. People will fight going forward to prevent this happening again. Should be renovating existing property and not destroying it. Expressed a fear of the hotels being deserted in years to come because of the perception of Jackson as being dangerous, and Fondren will be stuck with the carcasses. She doesn't think 3 hotels will make it. Our character is what makes Fondren. Out-of-place development is self-defeating.

Hugh Trussel - Statement

I tried to buy Fondren Corner but didn't get it. Is glad because Mike Peters did a better job. Stays in Homewood Suites, but doesn't like the way they look. I came here against this but now applaud this project, your speed and progress.

Jennifer Baughn - Question

What about the plans for Fondren House - David Jr's House - it has been on the tax rolls since 1940 and modified since but has been on that lot as early as 1903

Alan Lange - Answer

Intent is to move the small house behind Que Sera vs Fondren House. Cheaper to move. Fondren House too expensive at a cost of about 100K, has to be cut into 3 pieces and has some interior issues. The smaller house dates to 1955 and is a perfect candidate for moving at a fraction of the cost.

Erica Speed - Question

Asked about who had given cost estimates and the difference of cost between the two houses

Alan Lange - Answer

He said he didn't have to reveal that or who he talked to.

Joe Rankin (Rankin Interiors) - Statement

There is a difference between destroying character and enhancing character. With progress, there is going to be some inconvenience. "A lot of people didn't want Fondren Corner done, but look at it now." Other cities have been sensitive to preservation, they haven't destroyed, and they have enhanced and improved. We need this - Fondren can profit from this.

David Knight - Question

I am a recent resident but knew what I was buying into. Concerned about traffic, detours, getting around Fondren during construction and construction disturbance. What are the times of construction? You should as a development be responsible for the roads that will deteriorate during construction.

Chico Patel - Answer:

Construction hours will be 8am to around 4:30pm.

Audience Member - Question

Have you signed a Hilton franchise agreement? If so, when?

Chico Patel - Answer

Yes. Would not reveal when.

Jeff Karrer - Statement

Everyone is just here to placate us. You knew about this sooner. This is now about future development and avoiding situations such as this going forward. What about our future zoning?

Scott Crawford - Statement

Standard sidewalks on State Street are 5' but you cannot pass and walk side by side - I urge you to consider a wider sidewalk if at all possible. Please go at least 6 feet.

Jane Alexander - in closing

It will be up to you as a community to continue the discussions of where you need to be going from here and for your future. I urge you to be a part of the organizations that are already in place working for you.