

Mark Kaplan
Lawrence, Kansas

Monday, May 4th, 2015

Dear Aaron – and board members and staff of the ELNA –

I'm writing, upon the day of your May gathering, to beseech you all to take a take a strong stand on behalf of the long-term welfare of our Old East Lawrence district, in the context of further discussion regarding the proposed 'Ninth Street Arts Corridor' project.

I personally view the corridor project as nothing more than an attempt to commercially develop and gentrify the north end of our neighborhood by Tony Krsnich and Doug Compton, with the city and taxpayers riding shotgun, and the developers doing no more than hiding behind the skirts of 'the arts,' while pretending they know something about 'culture,' and its continuity. This effort comes on the heels of their condo and apartment buildings now and soon rising along the edges of the oldest and most delicate section of the neighborhood, north of 11th. Last week, the Lawrence Journal World announced a plan for a convention center on its current footprint, just yards from the northwest corner of the 'hood, while the old bean cannery, now Allen Press, on East 10th, will close in the coming years, and offer another residential 'redevelopment' opportunity just off the truck route that runs up and down Delaware Street.

This being said, in the interest of expressing my outrage over the banality of this unholy collusion between real estate development interests and the Lawrence Arts Center -- I feel that the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association can help itself, and the historic core of Lawrence, by offering conditional ongoing support for this intentionally-ambiguous attempt to expand downtown's bar and restaurant district into our living rooms and beyond.

I propose that the neighborhood explore some kind of motion to offer support for the East Ninth Arts Corridor concept forthwith – contingent upon strategic measures being instituted by City Hall, such as a needed reopening of debate about the city's Downtown Design Guidelines, development of a new EL Neighborhood Plan, unvisited for decades – and/or a protective Overlay District for the neighborhood north of East 10th Street, to the Kaw. Period. The land-use and zoning issues pertinent to protecting our historic residential district from the redevelopment and commercialization of East 9th could come out in that wash.

To date, this 'arts corridor' charade has advanced through the El Dorado consultant's juvenile 'dog-and-pony' show, replete with 'peanut galleries,' without a hint of reference to how the expansion of commercial development along 9th Street and Pennsylvania will affect the existing neighborhood. But regardless of any 'corridor' hype and pretense – our north end needs to be down-zoned by half or more. The west side of the 800-block of Pennsylvania needs neighborhood-friendly design guidelines, as do the blocks were EL interfaces with a 'high-rising' downtown. The Santa Fe Depot needs to be acquired by the city and restored. Hobbs Park needs

reinvestment in its design, and the restoration of crumbling Municipal Stadium. Trails need to be completed. Street trees need to be replaced. Dozens of new local register listings need to be processed by City Hall – all before the neighborhood further enables our local 1%'s attempt to hijack what so many of us have spent decades protecting and enriching.

As for the street itself -- East 9th doesn't need to be 'reimagined.' It needs to be reconstructed, as do other neighborhood streets, at its original paved 1911 width of 30 feet, bricks uncovered or replaced, limestone curbs preserved and reinstalled – with the sidewalks on either side completely rebuilt authentically, as testament to the Roman roadbuilding skills employed in their original incarnation. Done. No need to waste more time and money on architects and urban designers at El Dorado.

Development pressures are indeed upon this great old neighborhood that we all call home. The 'arts corridor,' nothing more than a stalking-horse for even more development, at your expense -- should move forward if and only if these folks can be made to respect the heritage, history and community that makes our district special.

Again, I urge our leaders and members of the ELNA to offer conditional support for the development of East 9th as a 'cultural entertainment strip,' if and only if hard and fast measures are taken to protect the district from development interests that only intend to frack it.

The director of the Lawrence Arts Center, the developers, and City Hall, shouldn't have to be told that any ongoing attempt to force this poorly-disguised, taxpayer-funded development scam down our throats, without mitigation for our hosting district, will be met with all forms of legal and political road-blocks and disruptions – until these people cease and desist.

Sincerely,

Mark Kaplan