

December 23, 2014

Dear City Commission,

We are writing this letter to you in order to express our concern about published remarks from City Hall about the so called 9th Street Arts Corridor Grant Program. First of all we lived in the 900 block of Rhode Island Street for many years and were always proud of the diverse and creative environment that was East Lawrence. Today we live on Learnard Avenue , yet still feel the same love for our community and its population. We feel it is reasonable to comment on 9th St issues because whatever happens in any part of Lawrence reflects the community as a whole. It bothers us that some folks have made negative comments about ‘a small group of East Siders...’ in regards to this 9th St. issue. We would remind the sitting commissioners that in the 2013 election most of you were elected with less than 6,000 votes and some less than 5,000 votes. That, my friends, is not a majority and in fact is a very, very small percentage of votes. Considering that you are making decisions for the 100,000 or so living in Lawrence but others in the community as well...you may want to tone back some of your comments. As well, considering recent projects approved or announced by the City Commission such as the Oread Hotel, the Rec Center, the 11th and Mississippi project, the 11th and Mass project and others... you may well want to take another look at what the East Lawrence neighborhood association is suggesting. You may also look at past city project such as the Borders Bookstore , Tanger Mall in North Lawrence, and the Riverfront Outlet Mall...all of which were promoted with full approval of the commission then sitting and all promising to ‘change Lawrence for the better’ to improve the community, to provide jobs, to bring money- spending visitors from across the state and all of which fell into nothingness, empty buildings and financial loss.

We really hope that all community members can come together and work on this project and we really hope that in the end East 9th St. does not just become a retail mid-way and party strip. Finally, it goes without saying that the City of Lawrence has now and will continue to grow and create together. We have come a long way by working together. Our downtown is known across the nation as a unique place to visit and experience something out of the ordinary.

Sue Ashline and Jim Mccrary

P.S. If you really want to see what a neighborhood thinks of your re-building their community without participation...why don't you announce that you are going to move the East 9th Street Arts Corridor and call it the West 8th St Arts Corridor from Tennessee to Mississippi.