

Dear Landmarks Commission Members:

There are certain areas, especially within our defined landmark districts, that deserve a high degree of sensitivity and should not be earmarked for urban density building.

In my estimation the north side of the 700 block of Williamson Street is not one of these areas. Instead, I believe that this is an area where we can add density through high quality new construction while maintaining the integrity of the existing historical buildings and area.

I opened Ground Zero Coffee at 744 Williamson Street in May, 1998. My wife Beth Rosen and I built our family home across the street at 731 Williamson Street in 2008.

When we made a commitment to this area of the city sixteen years ago it was our hope that other great changes would soon come to this struggling corridor.

I believe that the proposal being developed by Marty Rifken at the corner of Williamson and Blount Street is that kind of change.

I wish that in cases like this one before you that the discussion was less quantitative driven (how big?) and more focused on the qualitative (is it great architecture using high quality materials in an interesting way?). I personally care less whether the building is five or six stories and more that a building gets erected that future generations will find pleasing and will be seen by them as a positive reflection of the time it was built.

I would rather have a great six story building than a dull two story one.

I do agree with City Preservation Planner Amy Scanlon that the building should be solid on all four sides. The new building on Livingston Street ("The Livingston") that you approved a couple years ago has this feature.

The north side of the 700 block abuts the rail corridor. I would also like to see in my lifetime rail mass transit return to the east side neighborhoods. (I have served on several rail committees over the pass decade, including the previous mayor's streetcar committee.) That would be a great return to our historical past. But before that can be feasible we must first build urban density.

Not every block or neighborhood should automatically be designated for this density building. But after spending almost every day (and now night) near this site over the pass sixteen years, I am confident that the north side of this block will very much benefit from a higher intensity use.

Thank You and Sincerely,



Lindsey Lee







