

## Letters

### Letter: Voting for Tremont rezoning would go against conscience

Print Page

Published: Wednesday, June 4, 2008 11:11 AM EDT

To the Editor:

I am writing to let residents know why I was not in agreement with five fellow council members who voted in favor of rezoning the residential Tremont properties to office. I continually tried to convince myself through the process that supporting the rezoning was the just vote. After all, "expanding our tax base" is good and I support that. "Moving our city forward" is good and I support that as well.

Redevelopment and economic development are words that elicit feelings of excitement and progress. However, there were some other words tugging at me that trumped the exciting words above -- "do unto others as you would have done unto you."

I became convinced that fellow residents would suffer avoidable economic harm, as well as lose the fuller peace and enjoyment of their homes, involuntarily. In the end, I could not in good conscience vote to take away this property right and inflict an economic harm upon a few of my fellow residents for my benefit.

The argument was made that they had already bought around the corner from existing commercial property and consequently should have expected this. There is a reason the words "around the corner" were used and not "next to" -- they are different realities. The realtors I asked and an appraiser I respect who provided a detailed appraisal all suggested a diminution of value to the abutting property owners of 5 percent to 10 percent. This translates into a \$15,000 to \$40,000 loss to each of the abutting property owners. I would not want my government to do this to me, especially when there is a high office vacancy rate and other options.

Others argued that it would be a "minimal" impact to the abutting residents. Assuming that 1 percent to 2 percent is considered "minimal," it would still translate into an average diminution of \$,5000. I suggest we all pull out our checkbooks and start writing a check made payable to the city of Upper Arlington for \$5,000. My guess is that it would not feel very "minimal."

It was stated that this rezoning was for "the greater economic good." I believe an even greater good is served by predictable government that is just and equitable in the high view it maintains for your private property and for mine.

We need to remember that this was a rezoning (largely private benefit) issue, not a redevelopment (largely public benefit) issue. Good government should work hard to encourage and, when appropriate, incentivize the redevelopment of existing non-residential sites like Kingsdale that would benefit many, on property dedicated to such use.

But can truly good government change the rules in the middle of a game and then assign responsibility to residents who should have "known better?"

Every vote sets policy. Those Upper Arlington residents who own a home "around the corner" from commercial areas are all now officially "on notice" from their government. I disagree with setting such a stark policy implicitly through random rezoning, and my vote affirms this dissent. I am receptive to the idea that we need to look at opportunities to expand our commercial footprint through rezoning. However, this needs to be an explicit policy decision with appropriate planning and consideration consistent with good government.

Frank Ciotola

Upper Arlington City Council member

Copyright © 2008 - Columbus Local News

[\[x\] Close Window](#)