

Main Gate Overlay,

excerpt from Councilman Cunningham's Ward 2 Aug. 10th newsletter

The Main Gate District was initiated by the City Council and designed to be a high density, transit oriented development along the street car route. Previously, after almost a year of meetings between neighborhoods and staff, the City Council approved the staff's recommended building height of 159 feet. Subsequently, neighbors asked for 90 feet. On Tuesday, I voted with CM Scott, Fimbres, and Mayor Rothschild to approve a building height of 90 feet and give an exception to one building for 130 feet.

Let's get real, if we are going to talk about being business friendly, and we are going to talk about building a high density urban core along the street car route, and we are going to talk about reducing mini dorms in the neighborhoods; if we are going to talk about these things, we need to walk the talk. I understand the neighbor's concerns, but ostensibly the building in question will be sandwiched between two 14-story buildings. It did not make sense to close the door on one project and to pick and choose other projects. I did not feel that was fair. There are a number of reasons this plan made sense:

- Demand for urban housing will outstrip the current supply and without it, residents are going to be incentivized to move further away from city centers. In other words, without high density housing, we will experience more controversy about mini dorms.
- The University Main Gate District is one of the few urban type neighborhoods in Tucson with a wide mix of housing, stores, services, diverse population, walk-able/bike-able areas and good public transportation.
- The City is spending millions to build the infrastructure for the modern street car and this development will help with the return on investment.
- Providing high density neighborhoods like the Main Gate will actually work to maintain the integrity of existing neighborhoods.
- The Marriott's approved 14-story tower and the Campus Acquisition

14-story building and other high densities established by Mayor and Council in the Main Gate District have set a precedent for height in this transition area.

- The density and heights are compatible with other University/urban areas and are necessary to provide economic viability and encourage further construction in the Main Gate District.
- High rise development does not jeopardize historic designations. The Marshall Foundation, owner of the historic property to our west, favored the 159' at the stake holders meetings.

With these considerations in mind, I stand by the vote and feel that Tucson is taking the proper steps toward responsible urban based growth. The last thing any of us want is sprawling development that invades the ecosystems of our beloved Sonoran Desert.