

**Archived:** Tuesday, August 18, 2020 8:36:05 AM  
**From:** [James Gwilliam](#)  
**Sent:** Monday, August 17, 2020 5:19:33 PM  
**To:** [City Council](#)  
**Cc:** [Clk](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment from Merlone Geier  
**Response requested:** Yes  
**Sensitivity:** Normal

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Dear Mayor Hall and Members of the Shoreline City Council,

Thank you for all you are doing in these challenging times to lead and represent the interests of the community you serve. Yours is not an enviable position given the state of the world with so many pressing issues at the forefront. In our dealings with the City, I have found you to be thoughtful and able to balance urgency with the ability to conduct a thorough and inclusive process.

For these reasons I have some thoughts about the contemplated Navigation Center a couple of blocks north of Shoreline Place on Aurora Avenue. These thoughts and observations come from first-hand experience as a property owner in many jurisdictions facing similar challenges regarding homelessness:

- **Expect property devaluation and vacancies at single family residential, multi-family and retail centers.** I hope that it is not lost on anyone that the funds assumed to be saved by the City in this transaction will be exponentially lost by a diminution of adjacent property values. People and investors have choices of where to invest their hard earned dollars and a homeless shelter, even the perception of there being one, will devalue properties in the vicinity, both residential and commercial. As Councilmember Chang suggested at the last City Council Meeting, this will without a doubt have an impact on the ability to attract tenants and partners to Shoreline Place and the Community Renewal Area. A similar facility for individuals experiencing homelessness was recently proposed adjacent to our \$300M mixed-use development under construction in Southern California. All it took was word of the announcement and realtors reported that all buyers of single family homes within walking distance backed out of escrow, retail tenants walked away from lease negotiations, and in the case of our project, a 250,000 square foot office tenant took their space requirement elsewhere. Even if the operation of this facility is stellar, the perception of a location with this use as a neighbor will without a doubt have negative economic impacts.
- **You must engage in a robust community and stakeholder engagement process.** Site selection and operations for this type of use are critical. To expedite a process without public input sets a dangerous precedent no matter how noble the cause. If this proposed use existed at the time of our acquisition we would have completed a very thorough diligence process to fully understand the operation, the operator and the residents using the temporary housing. Other adjacent property owners also would have taken the use into consideration prior to making their investment. Those voices deserve to be informed and to be part of the decision making process.
- **Consider assurances and enact policies to protect community interests.** One cannot simply trust that the noble ideals and compassionate hearts of the community will look past the perceived risks to the proposed operation, and you cannot ask the community to simply assume that this operation will be different from other homeless shelters. If the decision is ultimately made to allow this use, it must only be done under the strictest of code requirements, the violation of which would allow the city to revoke any land use permits. Assurances must reflect the legitimate concerns of neighbors and swift action taken when violations occur.

To not give these potential impacts consideration given the years of work and hundreds of millions of potential investment with the goal of revitalizing an already blighted situation in the CRA seems irresponsible and short sighted.

To the extent that the City chooses to engage with the community in a meaningful way, I welcome the opportunity to learn more about what is being proposed so that I too, may offer our thoughts, concerns, and recommendations. That is what was asked of us when we were working through our process at Shoreline Place and it seems reasonable to hold the City to that same standard.

Respectfully,

James Gwilliam  
Vice President, Development and Partner

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