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Subject: *Ext!* 7th and Wabash Listening Session: Summary and Observations
Attachments: 7thandWabashSummary.docx; ATT00001.txt

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To my fellow City Council Members,

I conducted a Listening Session about the future of 7th and Wabash on Saturday, February 29. Please look over the attached document, in which I have summarized input offered by the approximately 60 attendees.

I hope you will contact me with any questions you have.

See you Thursday,

Todd Nation
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7th and Wabash Listening Session: Summary and Observations
Todd Nation, Terre Haute City Councilman, 4th District
March 2, 2020

Summary

A Public Listening Session on the future of 7th and Wabash was held on Saturday, February 29th at the Vigo County Public Library. We started at 10:00 a.m. and finished around 12:30.

After viewing a six minute Garmong film showing construction methodology originally planned for the Convention Center and two Parking Garages, we discussed how the plans have changed over the last 18 months. Significantly, the West Garage that was to serve the two hotels on the Convention Center site has been designed out, and the CIB is now exploring the option of buying the Vigo County School Corporation headquarters at the northwest corner of 7th and Wabash to use as a surface lot for hotel parking. The CIB contends there will be cost savings if surface parking replaces the planned West Garage.

CIB member David Patterson attended and provided important perspective from the CIB point of view. David answered many questions from the public, and helped participants understand that the problem we are all trying to solve involves finding a long-term parking solution that will satisfy hotel franchise guidelines and owners.

After some questions and answers with many of the session's sixty participants, citizens took turns offering ideas. I summarized the fifteen ideas offered on two flip charts, and I have added parenthetical comments to better explain the conversation's context, as I understood it.

When audience ideas had all been offered, participants were invited to come forward, take three sticky dots and place them on what they thought were the most important ideas. The ideas which received more than one vote are listed below, followed by the number of votes and my comments.

1. No surface parking. 29
2. Multi-level garage with ground floor commercial/office space, including enough dedicated spaces to satisfy hotel parking requirements. 13

3. Alternative construction method for West Garage (poured vs. precast structure: can another subcontractor do it within budget?). 12
4. Use existing garages (to park hotel guests, short and long term). 4
5. Friends for Max Ehrmann (more sculptures and art celebrating local culture in an expanded park). 3
6. Bring CIB back into mix (refers to number 3 above). 3
7. Convenience parking for nearby businesses (in number 2 above). 2
8. Respect 7th Street Arts Corridor and 41|40 Arts and Culture District. 2
9. Keep government offices downtown (VCSC, State, WorkOne, Economic Development. Refers to number 2 above). 2
10. Bring ISU back into the mix (work together on parking and access). 2
11. Ground floor retail/restaurant/entertainment; places to interact with others (refers to number 2 above). 2

Observations

1. Participants overwhelmingly rejected a surface parking lot on VCSC property at 7th and Wabash as being an acceptable long-term solution.
2. The most widely accepted idea for the future of the VCSC property was a multi-level garage with sidewalk level shops and possibly a floor of commercial or office space. With 7th Street elevator and vehicle access, it could include a floor or more of stacked parking for the Hilton Garden Inn, providing a long-term solution to their parking problem.
3. After listening to testimony from a building trades representative, there was considerable interest in exploring an alternative construction method for the planned West Garage. Doubt was cast on the assertion that a poured-on-site parking structure would exceed the projected \$4.5M budget originally planned for the West Garage. There is confusion about whether alternative construction techniques have been fully explored, and whether a smaller, 3-level/160 car garage would satisfy both the budget and the minimum parking requirement for the 109

room Hilton, which will lose about 40 spaces when the Convention Center is build on its East Parking Lot.

4. Local attorney Gerald McGlone provided another perspective on the Kroger, Gardis & Regas legal opinion dated January 14, 2020 about General Ordinance 1, 2020 that was offered to the Area Planning Commission at their February 5 meeting. Mr. McGlone contends that although the Indiana Code says that the BZA can grant a variance from Development Standards, it does not give the BZA authority to grant a variance from a Use. Our City Code considers parking a Use, not a Development Standard. He further stated that if the BZA acts to grant a variance per our current code, it can be legally challenged on solid ground.

5. The overall tone of the meeting was, from my perspective, positive and constructive. Comments regarding the development of a Downtown Convention Center were supportive of the project and its potential benefits to downtown. Participants told me after the session that they didn't have any problem with Convention Center plans until a surface parking lot at 7th and Wabash was proposed.

end.