



White Center
Community
Development
Association

Tony Vo
Director, White Center Promise
White Center Community Development Association (CDA)
605 SW 108th street
Seattle, WA 98146

May 23, 2016

Mr. Daniel Bretzke
Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)
P.O. Box 94689
Seattle, WA 98124

Re: Sale of Myers Parcels

Dear Mr. Bretzke,

We wanted to follow up with you regarding a letter sent to FAS on March 22 about the sale of the Myers Parcels. We continue to stand behind the content of this letter, urging FAS to engage residents in White Center about land use decisions through a multilingual community engagement process, and to explore creative land use options that support community and family health. The content of our March 22 letter is as follows:

Our organization has recently met with the Seattle Green Spaces Coalition and Tree Pac and supports their efforts to keep the Myers parcels (located at 9501, 9600, and 9701 Myers Way S.W.) from being sold for commercial development. We are deeply concerned with the sale of the Myers Parcels in White Center and would urge FAS to explore better land use options for the residents of White Center and the surrounding neighborhoods.

First, we are concerned with the lack of community engagement with residents and community based organizations in White Center. There are various ethnic communities that live in White Center and before making such a significant land use decision that affects our residents, we would like to work with your organization to support a multilingual community engagement process so that residents can truly participate in the planning process.

Secondly, we are concerned by the health impacts that would result from the planned commercial development for this site. As has been well documented by the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, ¹ White Center ranks third among the most polluted neighborhoods in King County. Given the levels of high air pollution already present in our neighborhood, we are deeply concerned that bad land use decisions, such as converting this parcel of land to warehouse and impervious surface parking space, will only result in further air quality degradation.

We would like to work with your office to explore better land use options for these parcels and would urge you not to bring this sale before City Council until our concerns have been addressed.

However, we want to clarify that the White Center CDA is not against all development on the parcel indefinitely.

We are excited that over the last month FAS, Council Member Lisa Herbold, and Council Member Tim Burgess have been engaged in opening a discussion about the parcels' history as well as the city's internal process for community engagement on such issues.

Last week, we met with Hillary Hamilton and Daniel Bretzke from FAS to expand upon what we mean by multilingual community engagement and creative land use. We believe that our local government has a special responsibility to carefully consider the use of municipally-owned land through the framework of equity, especially in a time of rising land and housing costs and increased displacement in and around the city. Therefore, we are glad that city funds have gone toward supporting communities experiencing homelessness. However, we wonder if there are not parcels of higher value in other neighborhoods, and whether pitting funding for homelessness issues against environmental equity is not somewhat of a false dichotomy. If the land to be sold is municipally-owned, we also believe it is a special opportunity for the city to promote land use that will most benefit our community through local hire or shared use agreements; through carefully considering both economic and environmental impact, and consulting official representatives of the Duwamish tribe; and truly soliciting broad community input from nearby residents with different income levels and language abilities.

From our work engaging hundreds of community members in representative community surveying, a neighborhood-wide community summit, and youth internships, we have found that the neighborhood values development that promotes civic engagement across cultural lines; safety; access for *White Center residents* to family-supportive, well-paying jobs with benefits; attractive, safe and affordable housing, especially homeownership opportunities accessible to current low-income renters; culturally aware support to the plethora of existing small businesses in the community, who residents believe embody one of White Center's biggest strengths – the language and ethnic diversity of our community; and a built environment conducive to healthy activity, opportunities for neighbors to come together to socialize and interact, and opportunities for youth to engage in educational and play activities.

Due to these priorities as identified by White Center residents, we do not think warehousing or trucking operations are “all bad”, though they raise obvious and noted concerns about environmental and air quality impacts. The ability of these operations to provide a large number of jobs is, in fact, positive. However, we are unconvinced that they are necessarily a sole job-providing vehicle. In fact, without local hire agreements, it could bring no jobs at all to underemployed White Center residents. We also think the city could think creatively about soliciting interest or giving preference to “greener” buyers concerned with reducing their environmental impact. We are most excited by creative ways of activating the space that ensure marginalized populations share in thriving communities, such as mixing affordable homeownership opportunities with park space, or soliciting buyers looking for space for greener operations that support rather than displace existing small businesses in our community. While brainstorming with Hillary and Daniel we found that the zip line development could provide a win-win for equitable development and environmental stewardship, if the zip line company operates in a way that is inclusive of White Center residents of all income levels and language abilities. For example, they could be asked to

hire White Center residents; allow for joint use agreements with local public schools and community organizations; maintain portions of the grounds as park space; and provide a discount for local residents, especially lower income ones, to partake in the development's amenities.

Though the CDA can seek to fairly represent the voices of White Center residents in our community building capacity, we are far from the sole mouthpiece of the community. Therefore, perhaps the most important product from the meeting included the suggestion by FAS to create a one pager about the parcels and impending sale, including potential environmental and economic impacts of certain land uses and opportunities for community input, to be translated into Spanish, Somali, and Vietnamese. These one pagers could be distributed to the nearby neighborhood, including homeowners but also low income renters at KCHA properties Seola Gardens and Greenbridge, and the senior housing community at Arrowhead Gardens.

We are also glad that FAS is open to hosting small meetings with particular demographics, including possibly collaborating with the White Center CDA to attend a multilingual business mixer or tenants' meeting. There will also be opportunities during the summer, such as Jubilee Days, for FAS to table at.

Thank you for your commitment to respecting the voices of all in the community!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Vo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Vo".

Tony Vo
White Center Promise Director