

Councilmember Richard Conlin
City of Seattle
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Seattle, WA 98104

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Gentlemen:

May 23, 2013

We will all agree that densification should not be at the expense of the destruction of the local qualities that identify a neighborhood as a special place in the livability of Seattle.

Such a special place in the University District is that area between I-5 and Roosevelt Way NE, and from NE 47th north to NE 53rd. It encompasses the Blessed Sacrament Church and Parsonage; the Child Development School; the University Branch of the Seattle Public Library; the Seven Gables Theatre; the University Playground (one of the U District's rare open spaces); and a significant number of 1900-1920 Craftsman houses, many recently rehabilitated.

This existing area of public and private use is a unique humanly -scaled enclave, well-defined by arterials on the east and west, and on the north by single use, and on the south by greater building heights (including the tower of University Plaza). As such it is already a "buffer", and to up-zone it would be to destroy it.

Greater heights of the surrounding structures would demean the settings of the church, the school, the library, and the theatre. They would shadow the edges of the Playground (where most of the passive and family activity occurs) and shrink the size of the open vault of its sky. They would accelerate the loss of Seattle's dwindling inventory of architectural treasures. In no way is this an improvement in Seattle's livability!

For further densification consideration should be given to a lid to the west of 7th Avenue NE over the on-and off-ramps of I-5. There is where greater building height makes common sense and conserves civic value.

Sincerely,



Philip Thiel, Architect
Professor Emeritus, U.W.

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