REPORT ON HILLCREST VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTER

MEETING OF JUNE 19, 2017

**Please see the following report by Council Member Greyson.**

**The Hillcrest Shopping Center is in Council District 12, and affects many District 11 citizens. Council Member Kleinman stands with Council Member Greyson in leaving the current zoning plan in place.**

Many neighbors who missed the June 19th meeting because they were unable to attend that night or unable to get into the small meeting room, have asked me to write a report on what occurred during the meeting.

First, Dallas Cothrum, the owner's representative who called the meeting, apologized for the size of the venue, explaining that it was the only place he could find in Far North Dallas to hold the meeting.  There were around 140 people in the room and another 100 or so people who were either outside or who left because they couldn't find a parking place or couldn't get into the room.

Mr. Cothrum began his power point presentation by outlining the current state of the shopping center--too many vacancies, not enough cash flow.  The owner has consulted with three national retail management firms who all stated that the center has an outdated design; the second floor retail toward the back of the property is not functional.

He went on to list the types of retail that are currently interested in renting space in the center such as ethnic restaurants, nail salons, cell phone stores and dollar stores.  The owner says he doesn't want to lease to those uses but may be forced to if he can't get a zoning change.  Mr. Cothrum said his client owns the center (minus the gas station and the grocery store) outright and can afford to sit on the property for a long time.

Mr. Cothrum then discussed the proposed mixed use plan the owner wants to pursue for the property.  The plan shows several hundred apartments with retail on the ground floor of the units along Arapaho.  There would be a row of rental townhouses in the back of the property (north side of site). He then took questions.  Many of the neighbors suggested other possible uses that could locate on the property.  Some were interested in for-sale townhomes or other types of single-family housing but were told that the price of the land (around $14M for 11 acres) would make the homes too expensive and difficult to sell.

Many of those present were concerned about overcrowding at Brentfield and Prestonwood Elementaries if apartments were built.  Mr. Cothrum said the apartments would be mainly one and two bedroom units that wouldn't attract families with children.  RISD Board President Kim Caston was at the meeting and spoke about the district's ongoing efforts to address attendance at those two schools.  RISD will "flip" the two buildings at Brentfield to create more space for the very large group of incoming kindergartners and then, as those children advance through the grade levels, will flip the buildings back.  RISD has also made numerous changes at Prestonwood to create a totally up-to- date elementary campus there.

The majority of those at the meeting and the vast majority of all the emails I've gotten--both before and after the meeting--about this potential rezoning were adamantly opposed to apartments at that site. I said that, based on the input I had received from the community, I would oppose any effort to rezone the shopping center for apartments.  Unlike the Walmart site at Arapaho and Coit, where opposition didn't succeed because the property already had zoning that allowed a big box use, this property at Hillcrest and Arapaho has a current zoning which does not allow multifamily.  If the owner decides to proceed with a zoning case, I am confident that opposition from the surrounding neighborhoods, coupled with my denial, would result in a city council decision to leave the current zoning in place.

Lastly, I have recently heard of interest in the property from uses other than those mentioned above.  I do not believe the outlook is as bleak as the owner says it is.

Sandy Greyson

Councilwoman

District 12