

From: Don Parker

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Subject: Open Letter to City Council Regarding RZ 17-08 (3911 S. Caraway Road)

Members of the Jonesboro City Council:

My name is Don Parker, and as many of you know from my appearances before the Council, I am an attorney in Jonesboro. I am also a resident of Jonesboro for 22 years and my wife and I own commercial and residential real estate here. We own the Caraway Business Park, which is located at 3800 S. Caraway and has 34 office/business/retail units. Caraway Business Park is exactly across the street from the proposed main entrance into the proposed 300 Unit Apartment Complex by Braxton Development. At the MAPC meeting on April 25, I spoke in opposition to the this project as the owner of Caraway Business Park. I was surprised to learn that the Council waived the second reading of this proposed multifamily rezoning (which I have been repeatedly told by the Council that this never happens when there is opposition), and that the Council will consider this rezoning request on May 16. I had planned to attend to voice my opposition, but I have a prior commitment with JHS graduation. I do not understand the rush by the Council to place this rezoning on fast track approval.

I am very concerned about the traffic on S. Caraway. I hear from my tenants at Caraway Business Park regularly about the frustrations they experience with the traffic on S. Caraway. There are over 15,000 cars a day that travel on S. Caraway. I have personally seen accidents happen from people attempting to turn left onto Glenn Place. I have seen bicyclist and pedestrians nearly hit or clipped as they travel by the Caraway Business Park. The pathway that the pedestrians and bicyclist travel is nothing more than a dirt pathway literally a foot from the white line of the pavement (which is the edge of the roadway as there is no paved shoulder on S. Caraway). I bought this property in 2003 with the understanding that S. Caraway would be widened with money being collected from the one cent sales tax that was passed by the citizens of Jonesboro in the mid 1990s. Either we were all misled about what the sales tax proceeds were to be used for, or the City ran out of money before getting to the S. Caraway road widening project. In any event, S. Caraway remains the most highly traveled two lane road in the City of Jonesboro, and Mark Nichols made it clear at the MAPC meeting that there are no plans for road improvements on S. Caraway at this time, although the Master Street Plan calls for S. Caraway to be a Principal Arterial Road (MAPC 4/25/17 Minutes at Page 10). That is unfortunate and creates real issues for the citizens of Jonesboro who travel S. Caraway daily.

The main entrance to the proposed 300 unit complex is directly across Caraway from the entrance into the Caraway Business Park. Left turns from S. Caraway into the Caraway Business Park and left turns from the 300 unit apartment complex will undoubtedly create a significant

bottle neck at certain times of the day. Mr. Lyons (representing the developer) stated at the MAPC that his client had worked with the City to determine the most significant locations of the entrances, and if the City disagrees with the proposed locations, his client would consider moving the entrances. Mr. Nichols concurred that this would be the best scenario for the alignment of the drives. It does not take a traffic engineer to figure out that if the main entrance were to line up with Glenn Place instead of Caraway Business Park, that a signal would be warranted or would be more warranted than placing the main entrance lined up with Caraway Business Park. I am astounded at this reasoning. Perhaps the real reason is that if the main entrance into (and out of) the 300 unit apartment complex is lined up with the entrance into Caraway Business Park, there will not be as much of a demand or need for a signal than if the main entrance was aligned with Glenn Place. In fact, as I understand Mr. Nichols' comments, that is exactly what is being stated. By putting the main entrance for ingress and egress to the 300 unit apartment complex lined up at the entrance into Caraway Business Park, it will delay (and perhaps eliminate) the need for a signalized intersection at Glenn Place.

I met with Mr. Lyons and Mr. Will Ralph late in the day on May 2, right before this rezoning was presented to the City Council on May 2. I requested consideration of two items. First, I asked that the Clubhouse be moved to the south and the south entrance would be the main entrance. Second, that the north entrance (the proposed main entrance) would be limited to right turn into the apartment complex (from the north traveling south on S. Caraway) and right turn out of the apartment complex (southbound), thus forcing all left hand turns out of the apartment complex onto S. Caraway (to head north) to the south entrance. This would only be required until the City widens S. Caraway to 3, 4 or 5 lanes. I suggested, but did not propose, a right hand deceleration lane and a right hand acceleration lane at the north entrance to facilitate the movement of traffic. As a side note, when The Links was constructed, the City required owners to make certain street improvements along their frontage in order to alleviate some of the issues caused by a new development. As a result, there is an area that has been widened and paved that covers the full length of The Links property along S. Caraway; it is my opinion that this area has made S. Caraway safer and has helped with the flow of traffic. At the time this letter was written, I had not received a response from Mr. Ralph, although he promised a response to my proposal over a week ago. This afternoon prior to sending this letter, I received a letter via email from Mr. Ralph declining to accommodate either of my requests. Obviously his openness to work with me was only a hollow gesture to alleviate any concerns that I have about the impact of his development on the Caraway Business Park.

I am mindful that this property is currently zoned C-3, which is appropriate and consistent with the neighborhood. However, it has been pointed out that a large scale commercial development would generate much more traffic than 300 apartments. I think that we all must use some common sense. No developer would develop a commercial development at this location given the lack of infrastructure. No commercial developer is going to develop a large project that would generate any significant traffic when the access is only by a two lane road that currently carries 15,000 cars per day. From an economic and feasibility standpoint, that would never occur. This underscores the dire need for widening S. Caraway.

Not only from a property owner perspective, but also from a citizen standpoint, I am concerned about the concentration of apartments on S. Caraway. As an attorney who represents

individuals and businesses seeking to rezone property for multifamily development, I professionally face concerns about density and concentration. That seems to always be an issue to address. If my math is correct, the requested rezoning will allow almost 17 units per acre. That is the most density of apartment units that I recall being requested in quite some time. Additionally, this project is located adjacent to The Links, which has 672 units. There are almost 1300 apartments already built within 1500 feet of this proposed rezoning. My fear is that we will soon reach the tipping point where we have another Apartment City in South Jonesboro. We have seen the problems that concentration and density caused north of the University. Do we want that to happen again in South Jonesboro? I do not.

While I certainly applaud the developer for proposing what appears to be an upscale project, I question the wisdom of building next door to 672 units, which from what I can tell have lost their luster of being a new attraction. While an enforceable property maintenance code would help deter some dilapidation issues with older apartment complexes, it can only do so much when there is a large concentration of apartments in close proximity. Please, let's avoid another apartment city in South Jonesboro. The home owners and property owners in South Jonesboro deserve this from our City Leaders. Please consider suspending (or at least carefully scrutinizing) further rezoning or development along S. Caraway until the City takes responsibility and fixes the infrastructure in this area. I am pleased to see efforts to rectify the neglect of the infrastructure in North Jonesboro. I think that it is time to address the infrastructure neglect in South Jonesboro. In the words of two members of MAPC with whom I discussed this project, the only way to get the City to address infrastructure issues is to keep approving large scale projects to force the City to deal with the problems created by years of neglecting the infrastructure. That is truly a sad commentary and perception of how the City's growth is being managed.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Best regards,

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