

July 1, 2015

To: Mayor Kevin Faulconer  
Council President Sherry Lightner  
Councilmember Todd Gloria, District 3  
City of San Diego City Attorney Jan Goldsmith

From: Trenton Riley

Honorable City Officials:

I have been a small business owner, homeowner, commercial property owner, and multi-unit residential property owner in North Park for more than 14 years. I also serve as an elected officer of North Park Main Street (our Business Improvement District) and head the Business Development Committee. However, I am writing to you on my own behalf today. In no way am I communicating as a representative of North Park Main Street. I am not a NIMBY and have a vested interest in North Park on multiple fronts. I hope you will consider carefully what I have to say.

I am very concerned about a project that is headed to our neighborhood. The University Avenue Mobility Project (UAMP), which will have significant impact on our business district, looks to be on track to be docketed for final approval by council on July 27<sup>th</sup>. If you are familiar with this project, it promises better traffic flow, improved walk-ability, and higher pedestrian and bike safety in our corridor. We can all agree that University Avenue can use those improvements. I am not anti-UAMP and look forward to some of the changes it will bring. However, this project, which was initiated more than twelve years ago, has some major problems. It removes almost all (100+) of the on-street parking spots in our business district. The original plans had very little in the way of mitigation for the lost parking. There were future plans to create head-in spots and some other possible mitigation measures, but nothing actually funded or tied to this project. For this reason, I filed a challenge to the CEQA report several years back. In response, city staff came up with partial mitigation (I believe the parking is approximated 80% mitigated at this time due to new head-in parking created in the neighborhood. However, I believe that the project still has 3 major problems that are very problematic for the neighborhood. I ask that you review these 3 items before you docket the CEQA Appeal for consideration in July.

1. Notice to Stakeholders – This project has not been explained or disclosed to the majority of the current stakeholders in the business district. There will be a major impact on the mostly small-business owners and property owners along University Avenue in the UAMP project area. Small businesses and property owners have a right to understand that they are losing the street parking in front of their businesses. When this project began over a decade ago, there may have been outreach to the existing businesses and owners. However, if you have been to North Park recently, you are probably aware that there have been countless changes to the business panorama over the past 5 years. There has also been significant turnover of commercial space ownership. I believe that the City of San Diego has a responsibility to provide outreach efforts to inform the CURRENT stakeholders of what this project entails and what they can expect in the ways of impact. I have asked city staff repeatedly (three separate occasions) to provide the information on exactly when they reached out to stakeholders. I have been told that staff doesn't know. I personally only remember one time that the city staff organized some outreach – I believe

it was when the CEQA determination was made and a small group was gathered in a North Park business to discuss the coming changes. When I ask Councilmember Gloria's office about how the city is going to formally notice these stakeholders, I am told that when the project starts they will let everyone know. They also state that since the North Park Planning Committee was engaged during the early stages of this project that is all that they are formally required to do. Our new businesses and property owners deserve more than that from their City. I believe the City has a moral imperative to reach out to the existing stakeholders prior to approving this project. To compound the problem, the City's website reflects information on this project that is more than 5 years old. The project manager listed is no longer an employee. The contact information is wrong. There is no timeline. The scope of the project is inaccurate. I have asked multiple times that this be updated so we can do outreach to the businesses in the area – as of this date, there is no update. I will not belabor the point. I believe the City has a moral/ethical (if not legal) responsibility to formally notice and inform the current true stakeholders that will be highly impacted by this project. *Please consider this and hold off on docketing the UAMP CEQA Appeal until the City has a plan to do outreach.*

2. Inadequate Mitigation – The additional parking that has been created by the new head-in parking spots is surely an improvement to the neighborhoods. It has been greedily absorbed by the residential citizens of the neighborhood far ahead of the removal of any parking from the business district. The project relies (per city staff) on a 2009 parking study to identify and quantify the parking needed to replace the parking removed from the business district. This six year-old parking study is surely out of date and doesn't reflect the current situation on the ground in North Park. For instance, the study mentions that current street parking, at its highest, is 61% utilized. Anyone that has been in North Park at any time of the day knows that this is a laughable figure. In addition to the inaccurate information in the parking study, the mitigation effort also sited parking far from the most affected areas. This parking is, for the most part, located blocks away from the central district in residential areas. As mentioned, it has been absorbed by the already needy residential parking population. Many of our businesses need short-term, close-by parking to survive. Imagine the dog groomer, filtered water supplier, cheese shop, dry cleaners, and many more actual businesses having to rely on their customers walking long distances to conduct their business. They will die on the vine. Even the parking garage (which has been much higher utilized than projected) doesn't solve this issue. It is a great solution for longer-term parking, but is ineffective for short-term needs. I believe that city staff needs to do a CURRENT parking study to gain accurate information on the ground and to determine if the proposed mitigation is sufficient for the existing stakeholders. While I am not a parking engineer, it is easy to see that it is not. *I would request that you request staff to prepare a new or at least updated parking study prior to docketing this item for discussion at Council.*
3. Cement Median – The UAMP project deletes one full lane of traffic in each direction on University Avenue through North Park in order to create “bus-only” lanes. While the traffic calming and pedestrian friendly aspects of this can be debated, what horrifies everyone that I have talked to about this project is the cement median that will be constructed down the middle of University Avenue. As the project was originally presented to the community, there was to be a beautifully landscaped median installed down the middle of University Avenue (renderings can still be seen on the project's website). This project was sold to the community members as having beautifying aspects (due to the new median). Over the past year or so, city staff has backed away from that idea due to lack of funding. North Park Main Street has stepped up to agree to raise the

money to maintain the landscape via a proposed PBID, but has been help up by problems beyond their control. It is my understanding that city is currently designing the UAMP project and if it gets past a certain point (I believe 20% designed) before the money is raised to support the landscaping, that there will be no opportunity for the median to be landscaped. The design will move forward with a cement strip. There will not even be an opportunity (per staff) to stub out plumbing and use pavers that can be easily removed to accommodate future landscaping efforts. I was told that this is not a standard procedure and cannot be accommodated. I can tell you as a stakeholder, that this is NOT beautification of our neighborhood and that the community members will not stand for turning University Avenue into a desolate cement runway for buses. *I ask, respectfully, that you pause and allow staff to try to identify funding that will ensure that our neighborhood continues on the beautification path it is currently on. Don't set us back a decade or more by putting in a cement median. Please consider this before docketing the UAMP appeal for Council consideration.*

Thank you for your careful consideration of my points. I am passionate about our neighborhood, as are many of the current stakeholders that are affected by this project. The UAMP is very complex and there are several serious issues that need to be reviewed and addressed prior to the council making a final determination on it. I have never opposed a project like this. I don't oppose this one if the items above are addressed satisfactorily. I know I, like most of the stakeholders in our business district, want to see a green, walk-able, bike-friendly, business-friendly environment. We also want to see small, daytime businesses succeed. They are the lifeblood of a business district. Many of these businesses need short-term, close-by parking spots. We should be able to accommodate keep a good mix of businesses and reach all of those goals. *I ask that you please delay the docketing of the UAMP Project CEQA Challenge until the three main problems are addressed satisfactorily.*

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trenton Riley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

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